JOUR COMICS

WONDER!

ワンダー

河 あきら

Akira Kawa

1

JOUR COMICS

WONDER/① ワンダー

AKIRA KAWA

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WONDER!

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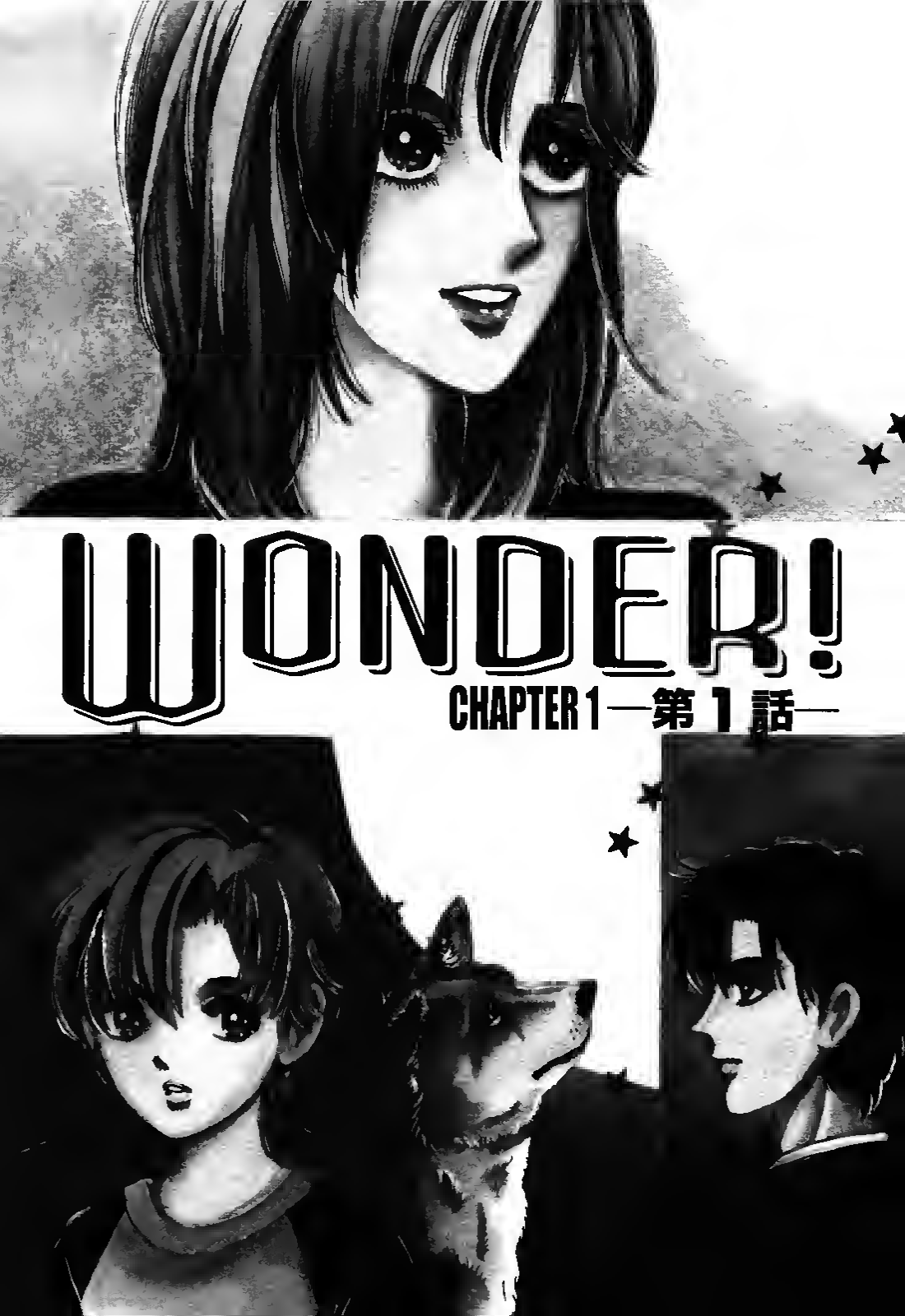

WONDER!
CHAPTER 1—第1話—

I FELT TERRIBLE THAT NIGHT.

SFX: CAN OPENING
FOR GOOD-NESS' SAKE.
GULP
SFX: LOOK UP
I'M TALKING TO YOU, WOOFY!
?
HEY, WOOFY! WHERE YOU HEADED?
HEY THERE,
HEY!

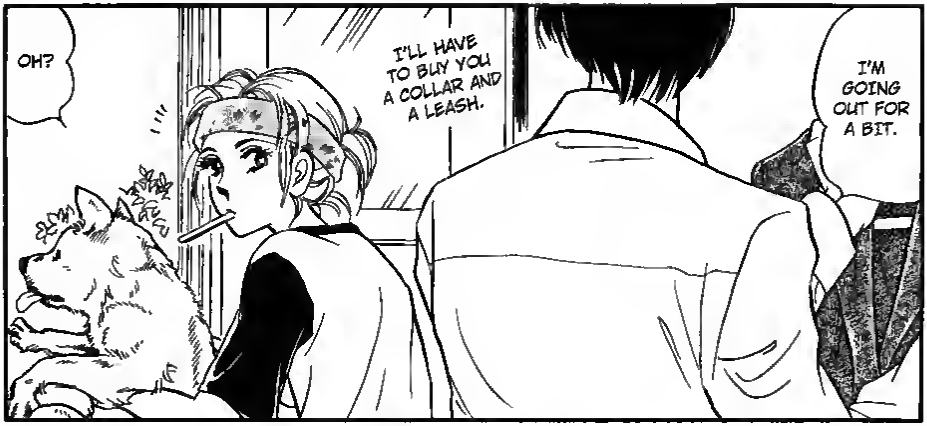
I JUST DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING STRAIGHT HOME.
YOU KNOW...
WANT SOME CHIPS, WOO?
MY DRINKING BUDDY I'VE BEEN WITH FOR A WHILE
SAID THAT HE WANTS TO HAVE A SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH A NEW GIRL AT WORK,
AND HE ASKED ME TO BREAK UP WITH A SERIOUS FACE.
RIDICU-LOUS!
I NEVER TOOK YOU SERIOUSLY, YOU IDIOT!
I MEAN, I HAVE A HUSBAND AT HOME.
IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS CHEATING ON MY HUBBY.
TAIYO AND I REALLY DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT STUFF.
MUNCH
MUNCH
MUNCH

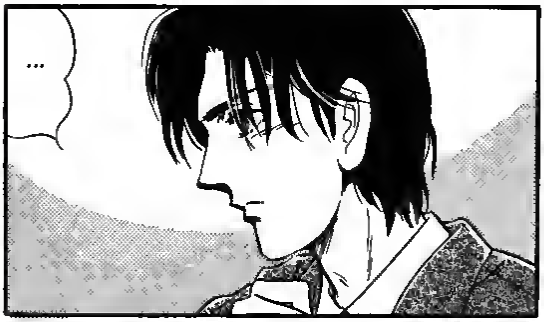
I'M SURE TAIYO'S HAVING HIS SHARE OF FUN WITH THE LADIES,
AND I DON'T MIND THAT AT ALL.
WE BOTH WORK FULL TIME AND DON'T WANT ANY KIDS YET,
OR I WOULDN'T, IF I NEVER RECEIVED THOSE PRANK CALLS AT NIGHT.
SIGH
AND WE BOTH CHERISH OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES, SO WE DON'T RESTRAIN EACH OTHER EVEN AFTER WE MARRIED.
I'M SO DONE WITH THAT.
THEY CALL UNTIL HE PICKS UP.
SO I'VE JUST BEEN SO IRRITATED LATELY.
RAMBLE
I FIGURED I'LL GO PLAY WITH MY DRINKING BUD, AND HE BREAKS UP.
IT EVEN GOT US INTO A FIGHT.
MAN, LIFE IS JUST TERRIBLE.
ガコン!
カン・ビン
HEY WOO YOU LISTENING?
SFX: THROWING CAN INTO TRASH
SIGN ON LEFT TRASH CAN: CANS, BOTTLES

OW, MY HEAD...
SFX: DIZZY
HM?
PICK HIM UP?
HEY DID YOU...
YEAH.
ほへ...
YOU WERE LATE LAST NIGHT.
WANT SOME COFFEE?

IS THAT "WONDER"?
I WONDER HOW...
WOOF
わん
HUH?
I SEE, SO YOU'RE WONDER.
MUNCH
ばくっ
DID YOU FEED HIM?
WOW, YOU EAT A LOT. DIDN'T KAORI FEED YOU?
SWALLOW
HEY... I NEVER MEANT TO KEEP HIM...
YOU'RE PRETTY FRIENDLY.
HAHAHA

WHO'S CALLING SO EARLY?
PROBABLY YOUR "GIRL-FRIEND."
RING RING
PRRR...
!
HELLO, THIS IS HINAMI.
BUT NOW SHE CALLS IN THE MORNING?
FOR ONCE, SHE DOESN'T CALL AT NIGHT.
WHAT ...?
DO YOU REALLY PLAN TO LIVE HERE?
YOU SURE GOT ON TAIYO'S GOOD SIDE.
SFX: LAY DOWN
HEY, LISTEN TO ME!
ZZZ...
IF YOU JUST GOT LOST, IT'S GOING TO BE PAIN LA...
WHERE'S YOUR LAST OWNER?
YAWN


OH?
I'LL HAVE TO BUY YOU A COLLAR AND A LEASH.
I'M GOING OUT FOR A BIT.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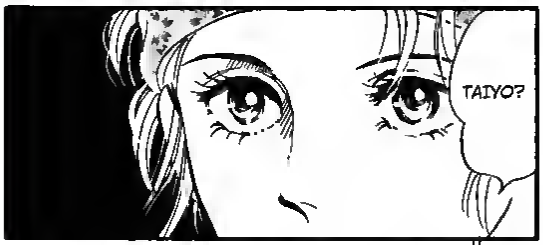
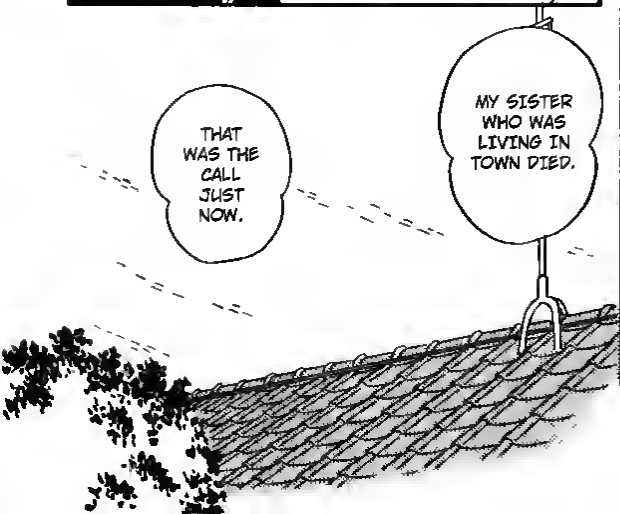

TAIYO?

ARE YOU ALREADY LEAVING FOR WORK?
NO...
IT LOOKS LIKE I'M NOT GOING TO WORK TODAY.


MY SISTER WHO WAS LIVING IN TOWN DIED.
THAT WAS THE CALL JUST NOW.

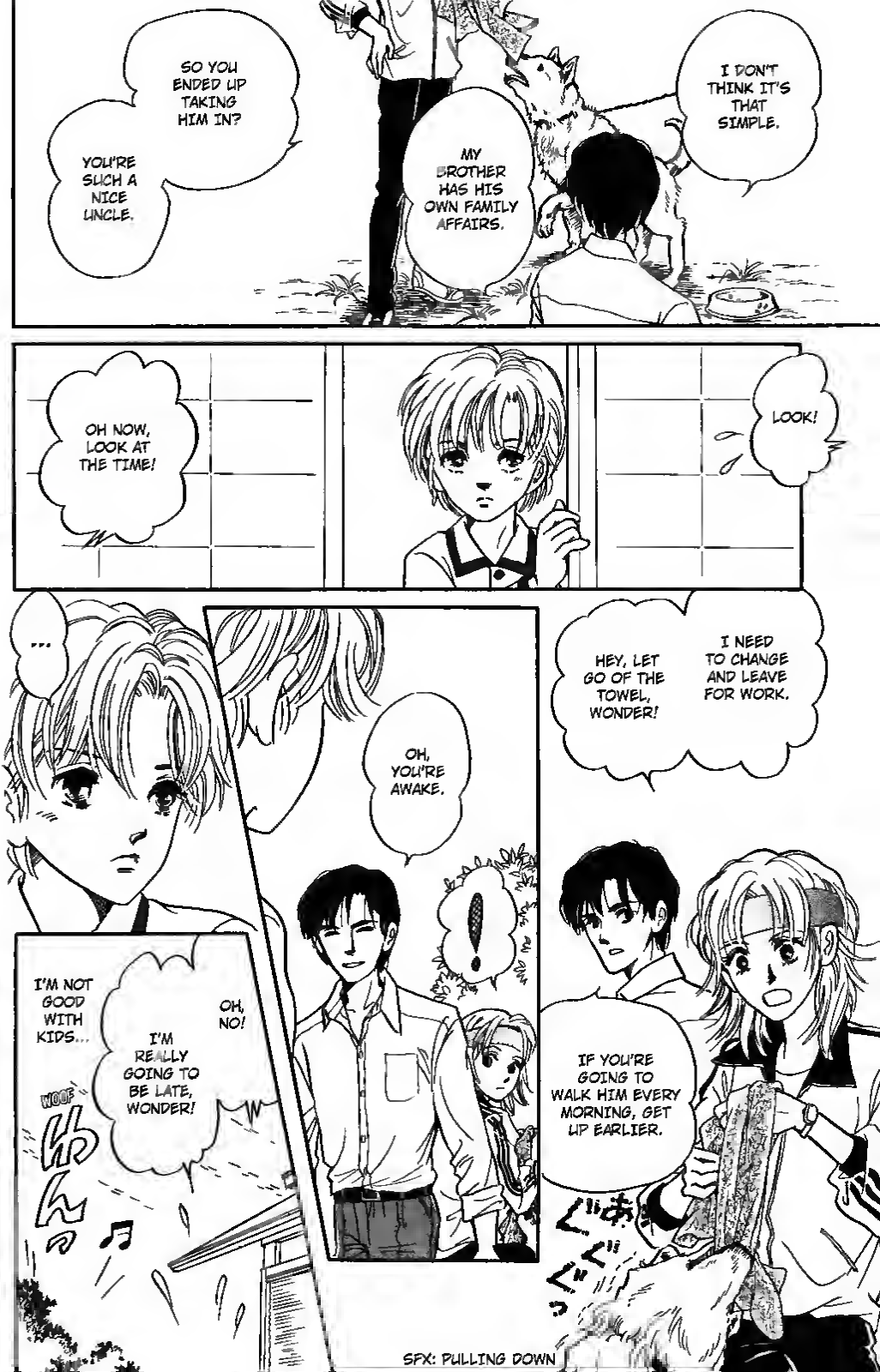
I DIDN'T KNOW YOUR SISTER LIVED SO NEAR US.
I LOST CONTACT WITH HER OVER TEN YEARS AGO.
SO I HADN'T MET HER IN A WHILE TOO.
I DID HEAR THAT SHE HAD A CHILD WHOSE FATHER SHE DIDN'T KNOW.
A CHILD?
IS IT THAT BOY?
BUT HE'S BEEN LEFT ALL ALONE.
I WONDER WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO THAT BOY.

WHAAAAAAAT?!
WELL, I HAPPENED TO BE MY SISTER'S CLOSEST RELATIVE.
WHY? HOW?!
WE'RE ADOPTING HIM?
JUNE
BUT THERE WERE OTHER RELATIVES THERE! WHY DO WE HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM?!
HE CAN ALSO STILL GO TO HIS SCHOOL FROM HERE.
LOOK, I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM, SO JUST DO WHATEVER YOU'VE BEEN DOING WITH YOUR LIFE.
BESIDES, WHAT ABOUT MY FREEDOM?
I CAN'T JUST BE A MOTHER OF A NINE YEAR OLD OUT OF THE BLUE!
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! I DON'T EVEN HAVE MY OWN KID!

I NEVER SAID THAT
THAT MAKES IT SOUND LIKE I'M SOME MEAN WITCH!
I'VE NOT ONCE COMPLAINED ABOUT ANYTHING YOU SAY.
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!
SO DON'T BOTHER THE LADY OVER THERE, OKAY?
LIKE YOU'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRANK CALLS WE GET EVERY NIGHT!
EVEN THOUGH WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR TWO YEARS, I QUIETLY WATCH OVER YOUR LOVE AFFAIRS.
SFX: POKES HEAD-IN
I WAS NEVER DATING HER!
YOU BROKE UP WITH HER?
THAT WAS JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING ON THEIR END, AND IT WASN'T MY FAULT.
BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY TALKED TO HER AND RESOLVED THAT ISSUE.

IN ANY CASE,
I TOOK IN WONDER YOU BROUGHT HOME DRUNK,
GULP
SO KOTA'S NOW A PART OF THE FAMILY, PERIOD!
DON'T PUT A DOG AND A BOY ON THE SAME LEVEL!
BESIDES, THIS DOG JUST FOLLOWED ME HOME, AND I DIDN'T...
LICK
HEY!
WHY ARE YOU INSIDE THE HOUSE!
I BOUGHT YOU A SHED IN THE YARD, DIDN'T I?
GOODNESS, THE CARPET'S ALL MUDDY!
WELL, SHE GETS PRETTY LOUD, BUT SHE WON'T EAT YOU OR KICK YOU OUT.
...
SO SHE'S NOT AS BAD AS A WITCH
SFX: STOMPING AND WALKING

SHE WAS WORKING AT A BAR NEAR N STATION.
THEY SAID SHE PROBABLY CAME HOME DRUNK AND FELL DOWN THE APARTMENT STAIRS.
HUFF HUFF
AND THE BOY FOUND HER FIRST?
...
SHE'LL BE BURIED IN OUR FAMILY GRAVE, SO MY BROTHER'S TAKING CARE OF ALL THE PAPERWORKS SINCE HE INHERITED THE FAMILY.
THEN YOUR BROTHER HAS LIKE THREE KIDS,
SO WOULDN'T HE LIKE TO BE IN A HOUSE WITH OTHER KIDS HIS AGE?

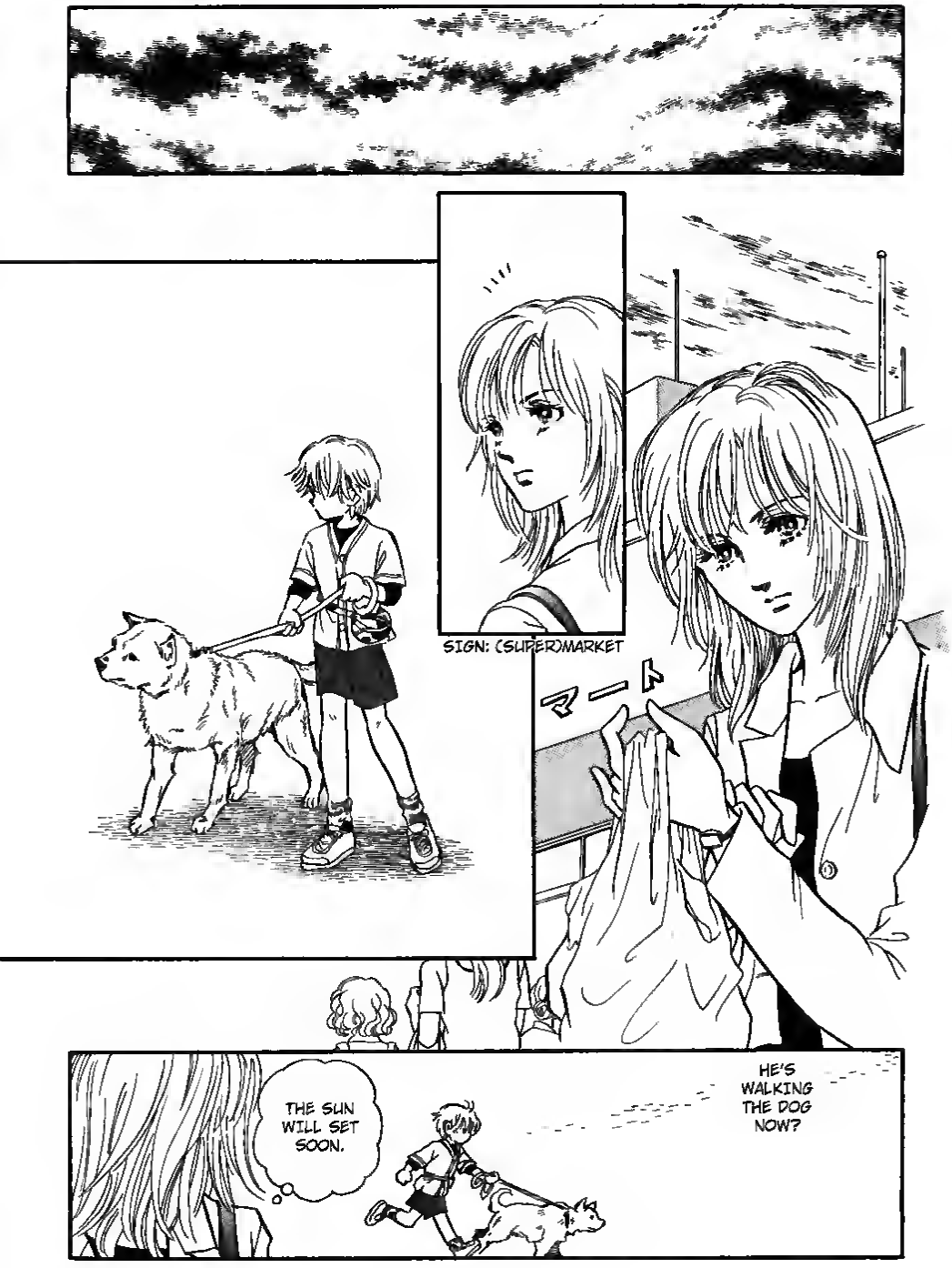

SO YOU ENDED UP TAKING HIM IN?
YOU'RE SUCH A NICE UNCLE.
MY BROTHER HAS HIS OWN FAMILY AFFAIRS.
I DON'T THINK IT'S THAT SIMPLE.
OH NOW, LOOK AT THE TIME!
LOOK!
...
OH, YOU'RE AWAKE.
HEY, LET GO OF THE TOWEL, WONDER!
I NEED TO CHANGE AND LEAVE FOR WORK.
I'M NOT GOOD WITH KIDS...
OH, NO!
I'M REALLY GOING TO BE LATE, WONDER!
WOOF わんっ
IF YOU'RE GOING TO WALK HIM EVERY MORNING, GET UP EARLIER.
SFX: PULLING DOWN

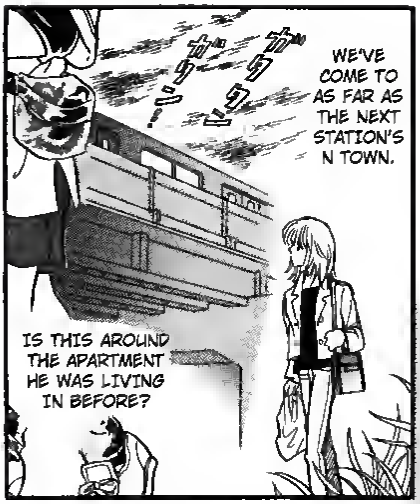
OF COURSE, I FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.
HE'S ONLY NINE, AND HE SAW HIS MOM DIE RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.
NOT TO MENTION HE HAS TO LIVE WITH SOME RANDOM RELATIVE HE'S NEVER MET NOW,
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!
AND HE MUST BE LONELY, BUT WE HAVEN'T BEEN COMFORTING HIM AT ALL.
WHY DO WE HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF HIM?!
WELL, I WANTED TO DISCUSS A FEW THINGS WITH YOU...
DIDN'T YOU BREAK UP WITH ME?
WHISPER
HEY KAORI,
DO YOU HAVE TIME TONIGHT?
...

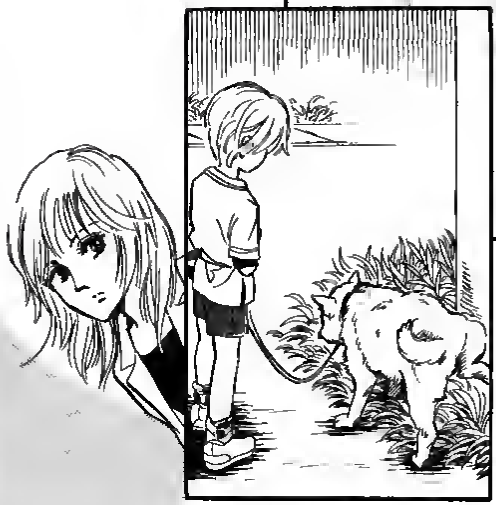
KAORI
YEAH! I HAVE TO GO STRAIGHT HOME TO TAKE CARE OF MY DOG.
YEAH!
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO STOP BY ANYWHERE.
AND I NEED YOU TO EXPLAIN TO HER THAT WE WEREN'T IN THAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP...
PLEASE, MY GIRLFRIEND THINKS WE WERE DATING,
WHAT?
I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF MY DOG.
I'M NOT HURRYING HOME FOR THE BOY OR ANYTHING!
HUH?
YOU CAME HOME PRETTY EARLY.
WOOF
おんっ
SFX: BREATHING HEAVILY
はー
はー
THAT'S UH... I NEED TO FEED WONDER
OH, I FED HIM WHEN I FED KOTA.

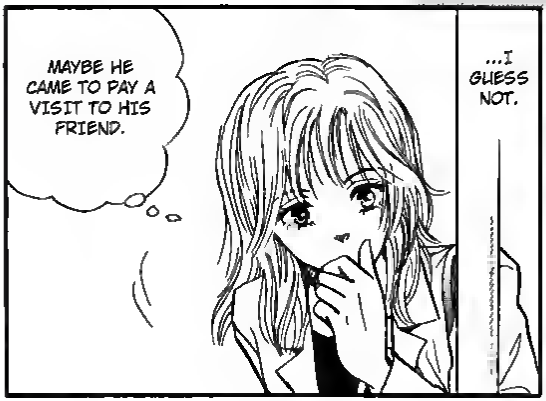
A WALK?
FOR WONDER?
...
OH...?
AND KOTA ALSO TOOK HIM FOR A WALK AFTER SCHOOL.
REALLY...
I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T GET LOST.
SO HE BEFRIENDED A DOG BEFORE ANY OTHER PEOPLE...?
WONDER, LET'S PLAY.
HEY, ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT MORE?
THANK YOU FOR DINNER.

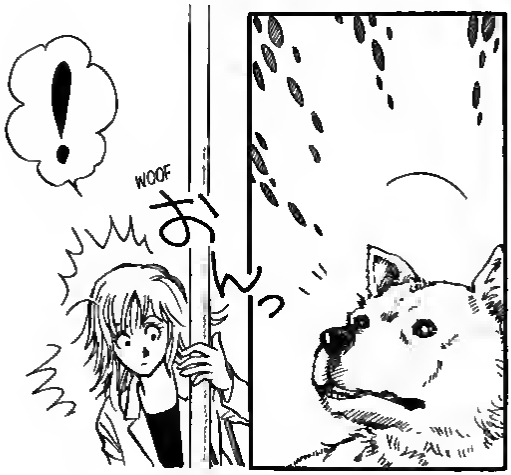
...
I CAN LEND YOU A HAND OR SOMETHING.
I FIGURED YOU ALSO HAVE TO WORK, YOU KNOW.
BASICALLY.
EVERY OTHER DAY?
IS THAT SO?
I'D HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THE DOG ANYWAY, SO IT'S NOT THAT MUCH OF A PROBLEM.
THAT WOULD BE...
MOST HELPFUL.


SIGN: (SUPER)MARKET
マート
THE SUN WILL SET SOON.
HE'S WALKING THE DOG NOW?

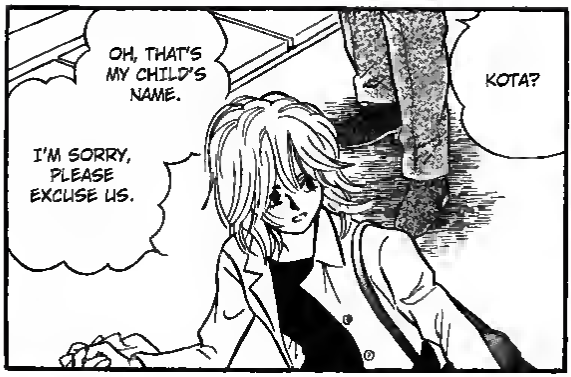

WE'VE COME TO AS FAR AS THE NEXT STATION'S N TOWN.
IS THIS AROUND THE APARTMENT HE WAS LIVING IN BEFORE?

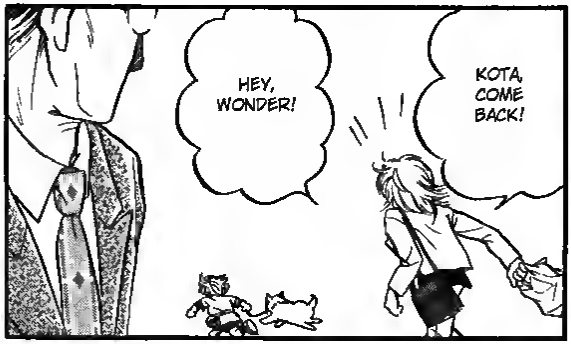


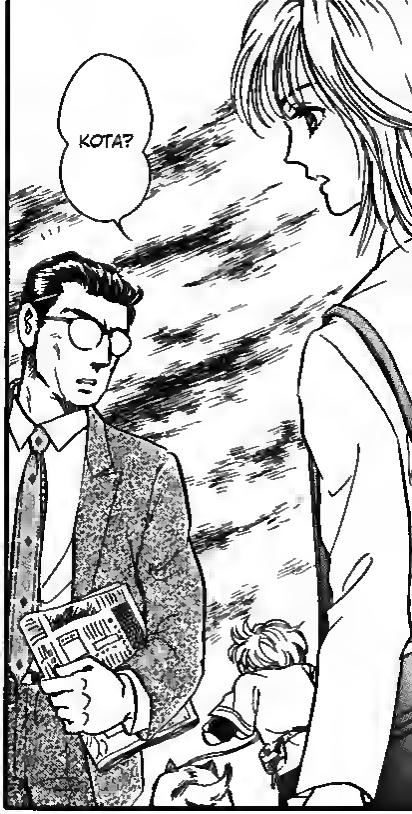

MAYBE HE CAME TO PAY A VISIT TO HIS FRIEND.
...I GUESS NOT.


!
WOOF
おんっ

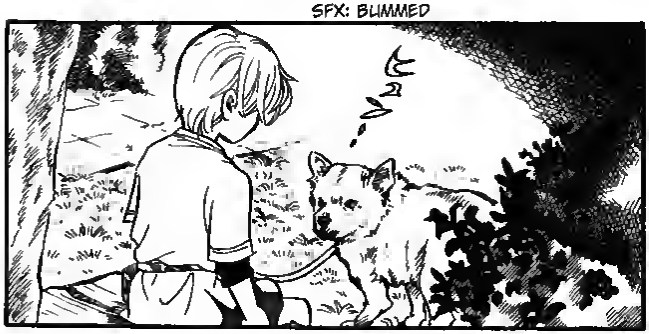
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU HERE.
WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.
UH...
OH...
DID YOU ALSO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO HERE, KOTA?
IS THIS YOUR FRIEND'S PLACE?
...
CAN I HELP YOU?

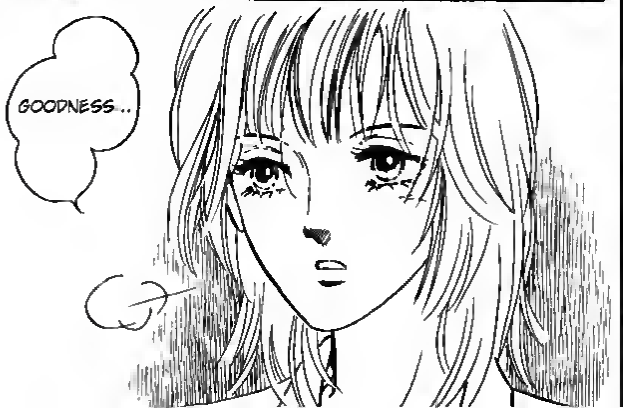

KOTA?
OH, THAT'S MY CHILD'S NAME.
I'M SORRY, PLEASE EXCUSE US.

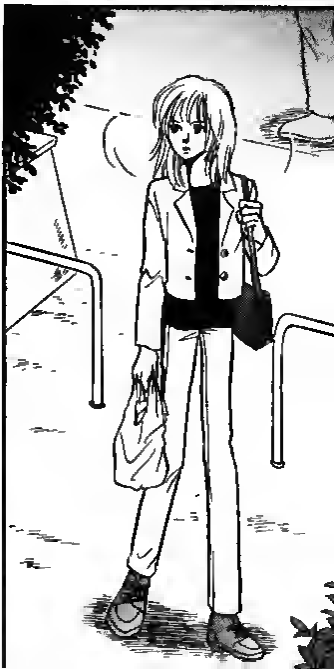

KOTA, COME BACK!
HEY, WONDER!


KOTA?

SFX: BUMMED




GOODNESS..



SFX: HIGH PITCH DOG WHINING SOUND
LOOK, WONDER'S TELLING YOU TO TALK, TOO.
GO ON.
...
WHAT'S WRONG ?
DID YOU KNOW THAT PERSON?
WHY DID YOU JUST RUN AWAY?
WHAT?
BECAUSE I SAW WHAT HAPPENED.
THAT MAN...
KILLED MY MOTHER.

WHAT?
BUT I THOUGHT YOUR MOM FELL DOWN THE STAIRS DRUNK?
MY MOM TOLD ME OFTEN...
THAT HE WAS ALWAYS PERSIS-TENTLY BOTHERING HER.
WAS HE A CUSTOMER AT THE BAR?
HE FOLLOWED HER HOME A LOT OF TIMES.
WHEN I WOKE UP, I HEARD MY MOM OUT-SIDE...
SO I OPENED THE DOOR,
AND I SAW HIM WITH MOM...
HE ALMOST CAME INSIDE A FEW TIMES.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS FROM EITHER.
BUT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO SAW IT, SO THEY SAID I WAS DREAMING.
I DID TELL THE POLICE,
BUT...
WHAT ABOUT THAT HOUSE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DIDN'T YOU TELL THAT TO THE POLICE?
WONDER FOUND HIM?

I TOLD WONDER ABOUT IT.
I TOLD HIM I WASN'T LYING,
AND WHEN I TOOK HIM TO THE APARTMENT,
HE STARTED RUNNING
I FOUND OUT WHERE HE LIVES, BUT...
WONDER WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO FIND IT,
AND WE GO THERE EVERY DAY, BUT I COULDN'T DO A THING...
YOU'RE SO STUPID.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THIS TO TAIYO?
YOU KNOW...
HE'S YOUR UNCLE, YOU KNOW?

WHEN I MARRIED TAIYO, WE PROMISED NOT TO RESTRAIN EACH OTHER AND NOT TO KEEP ANY SECRETS,
AS A FELLOW RESIDENT OF THAT HOUSE.
I'M NOT NICE AT ALL,
AND I DON'T EXACTLY LIKE KIDS,
BUT WE'RE GOING TO BE LIVING TOGETHER, SO I THINK WE NEED TO GET ALONG PRETTY WELL.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE PART OF THE FAMILY TOO,
SO YOU NEED TO STOP KEEPING YOUR PROBLEMS INSIDE YOU AND TELL US ABOUT THEM, OKAY?
...
NOT JUST TO WONDER.
OKAY?

I DON'T KNOW IF THAT MAN WILL TELL THE TRUTH,
BUT YOU SAW IT HAPPEN, RIGHT?
YEAH!
IN ANY CASE,
LET'S HAVE THE POLICE INVESTIGATE YOUR MOM'S CASE ONCE MORE.
!
GRASP
カプ
ハフ

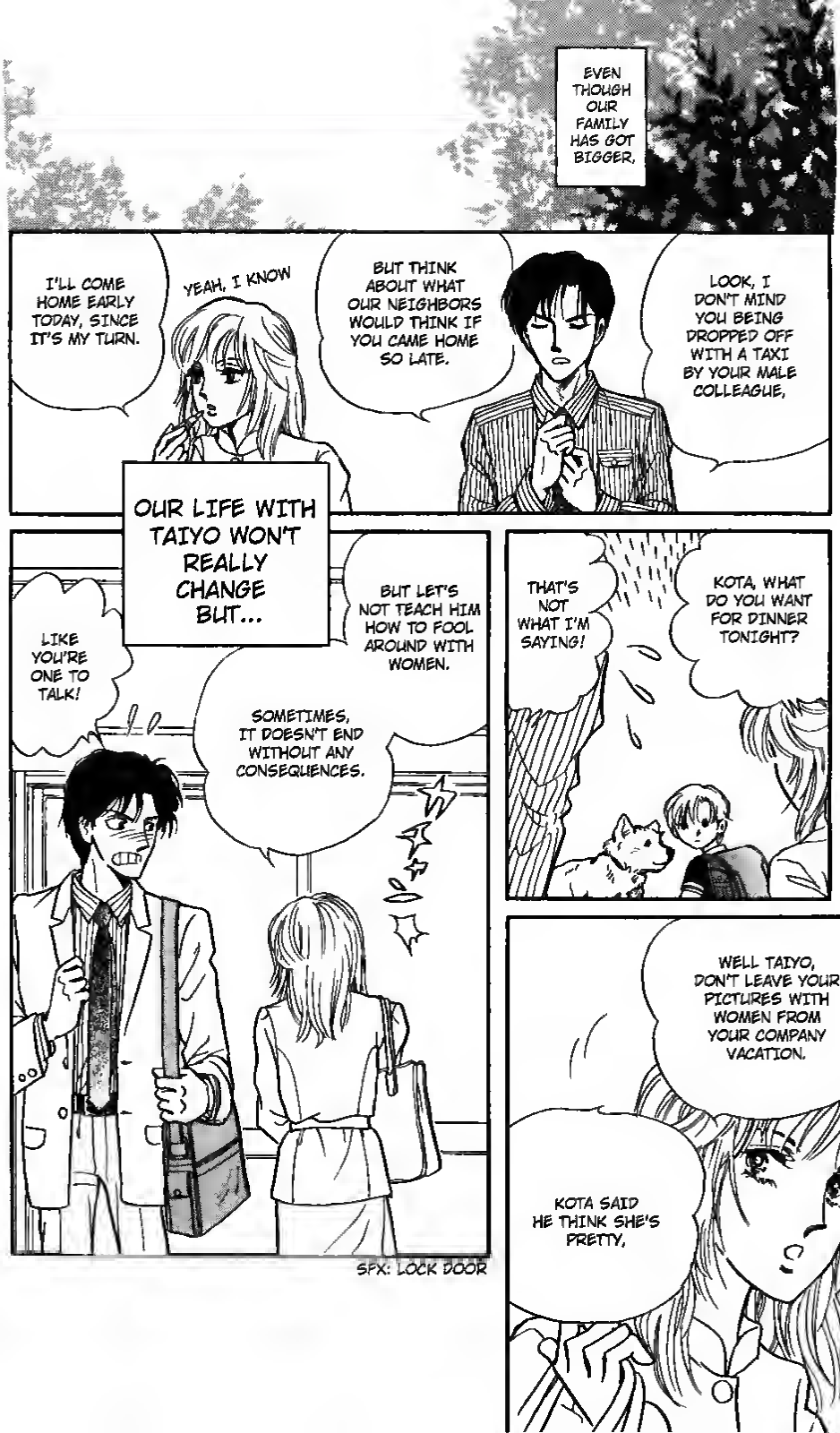
OW!OOOO
うぉんっ
KOTA?!
I JUST WANT TO HAVE A CHAT.
CAN YOU KEEP THE DOG ON A LEASH?
LET HIM GO!
THAT WAS AN ACCIDENT...
SHE MADE A FOOL OUT OF ME!
BUT SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T.
SHE ACTED LIKE SHE LIKED ME AT THE BAR,
I WAS SERIOUS ABOUT HER.

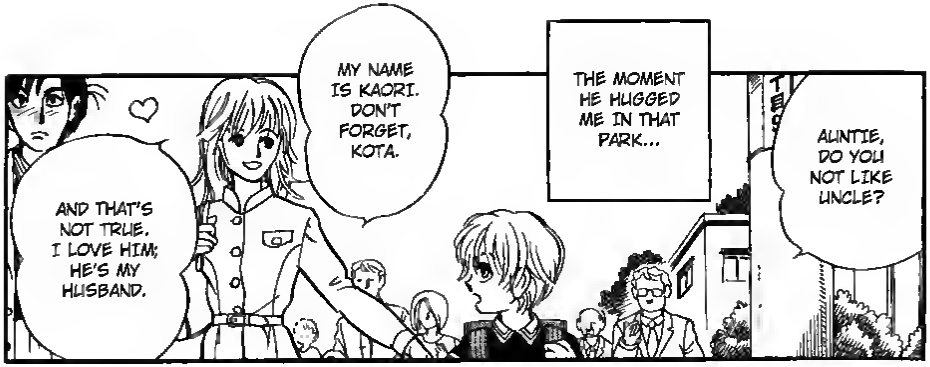
I NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD DIE...
I NEVER INTENDED TO PUSH HER DOWN.
HEY, GO AWAY!
I ONLY GAVE A FAKE NAME AND JOB AT THE BAR.
HOW DID YOU FIND WHERE I LIVE?
GRRR
DO YOU PLAN TO DESTROY MY FAMILY?
I CAN'T HAVE HIM SAYING ANYTHING UNNECESSARY.
I CAN'T HAVE MY FAMILY OR MY COMPANY KNOW!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO TO HIM?!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOOK HIS FAMILY AWAY!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SAYING?!
A FIGHT?

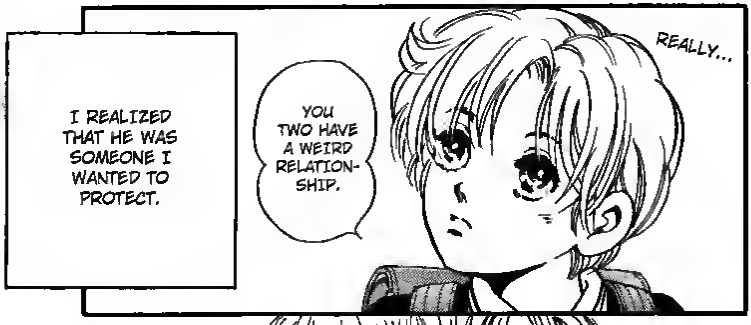
HE'S NEVER LISTENED TO A THING I TOLD HIM!
SHUT THE DOG UP!
SH-SHUT UP!
YOU IRRESPONSIBLY DID WHATEVER YOU WANT,
SO DON'T YOU DARE MAKE ANOTHER IRREVERSIBLE MISTAKE!
WOOF
ワン
ワンワンワン
ワンワン
!
PPP
OH, TAIYO?
CAN WE DO THIS LATER? I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING!
RIGHT NOW? WE'RE AT A PARK IN N TOWN.
WOOF
UNCLE!
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU...

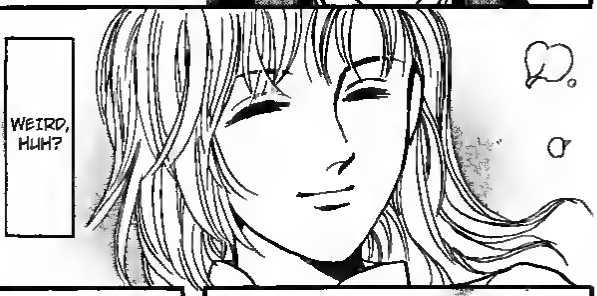
OH, NO.
AUNTIE!

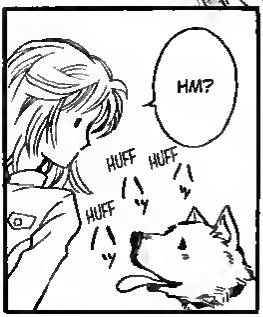
STOP TRYING. HE ONLY LISTENS TO WHAT THIS BOY SAYS.
PL-PLEASE GET THIS DOG OFF OF ME!
SNARL
WHAT'S GOING ON?
KAORI, YOU THERE?
OH, CAN YOU CALL THE POLICE, TAIYO?
SFX: HUG TIGHTLY
IS YOUR PRECIOUS BROTHER, ISN'T HE?
I WONDER


EVEN THOUGH OUR FAMILY HAS GOT BIGGER,
I'LL COME HOME EARLY TODAY, SINCE IT'S MY TURN.
YEAH, I KNOW
BUT THINK ABOUT WHAT OUR NEIGHBORS WOULD THINK IF YOU CAME HOME SO LATE.
LOOK, I DON'T MIND YOU BEING DROPPED OFF WITH A TAXI BY YOUR MALE COLLEAGUE,
OUR LIFE WITH TAIYO WON'T REALLY CHANGE BUT...
LIKE YOU'RE ONE TO TALK!
BUT LET'S NOT TEACH HIM HOW TO FOOL AROUND WITH WOMEN.
SOMETIMES, IT DOESN'T END WITHOUT ANY CONSEQUENCES.
SFX: LOCK DOOR
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING!
KOTA, WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR DINNER TONIGHT?
WELL TAIYO, DON'T LEAVE YOUR PICTURES WITH WOMEN FROM YOUR COMPANY VACATION.
KOTA SAID HE THINK SHE'S PRETTY,


AUNTIE, DO YOU NOT LIKE UNCLE?
THE MOMENT HE HUGGED ME IN THAT PARK...
MY NAME IS KAORI. DON'T FORGET, KOTA.
AND THAT'S NOT TRUE. I LOVE HIM; HE'S MY HUSBAND.

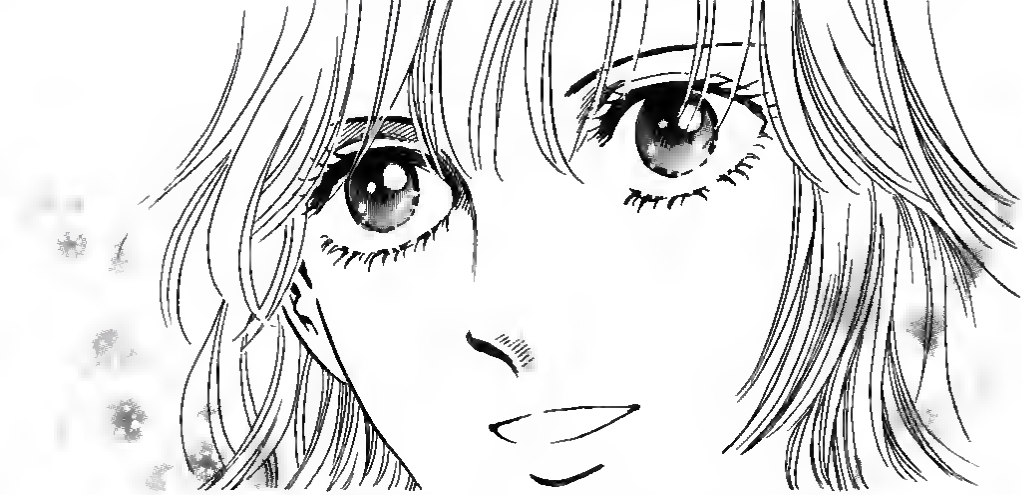






CHAPTER 1: END

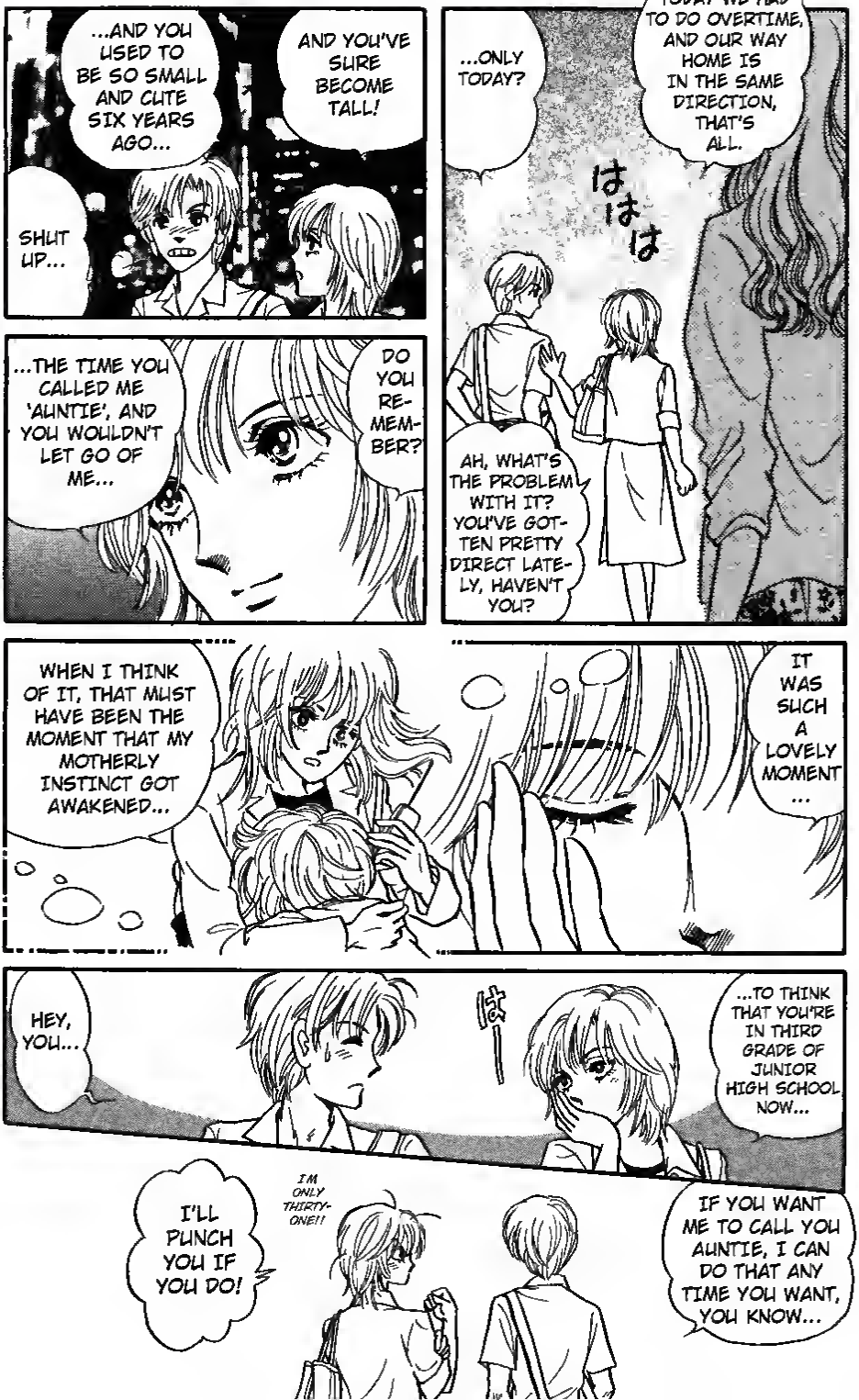
WONDER!

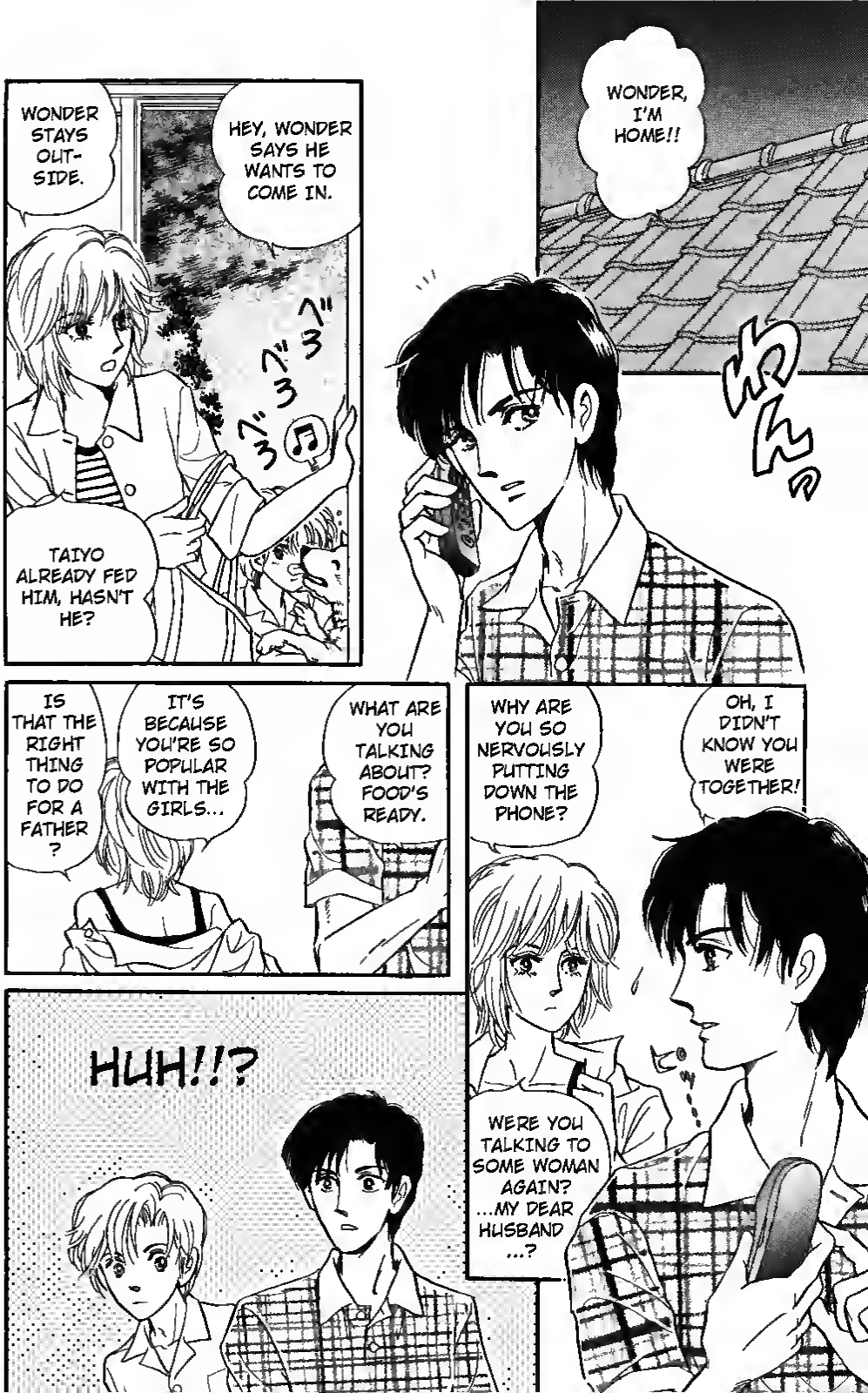


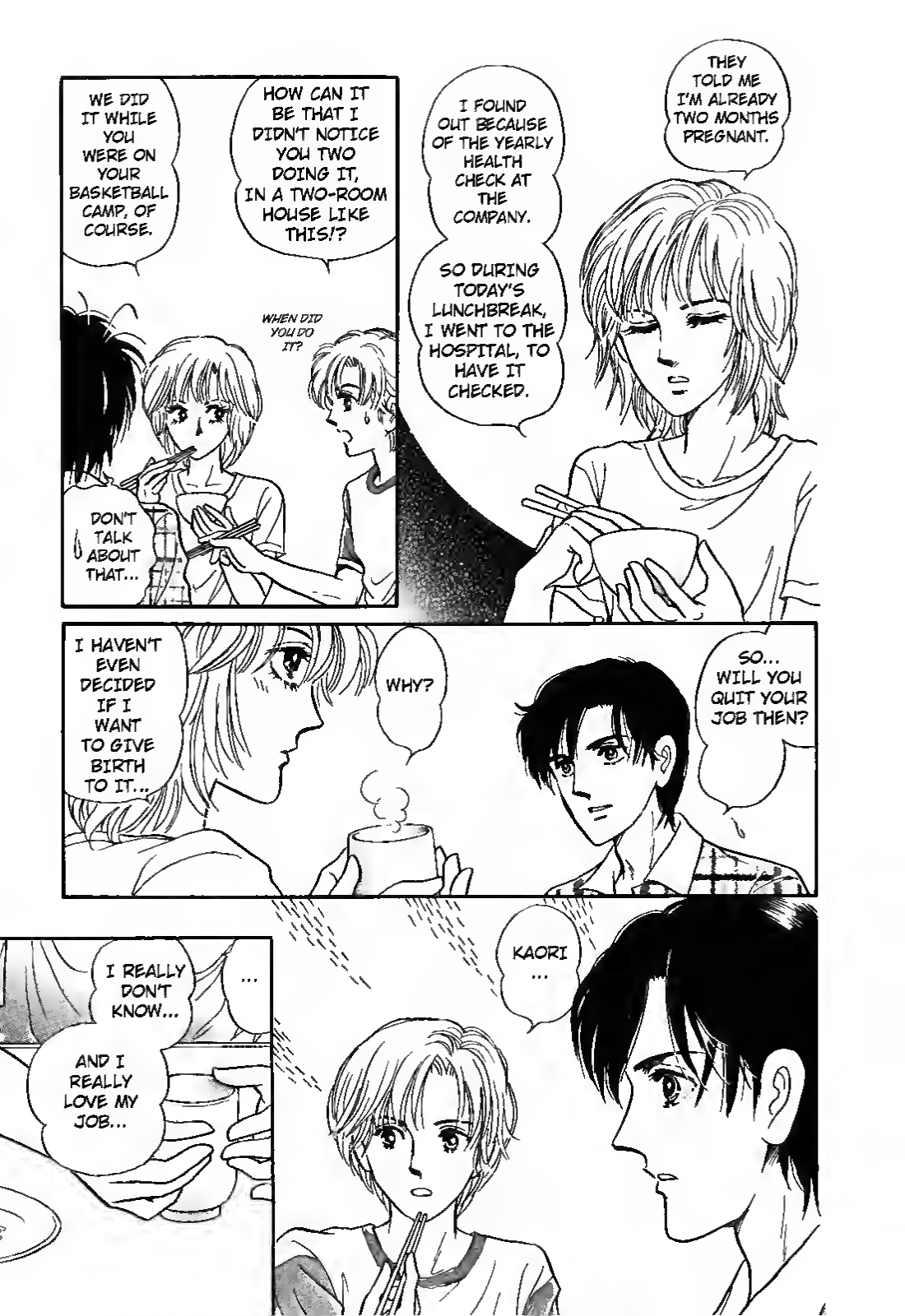
WONDER!

CHAPTER 2

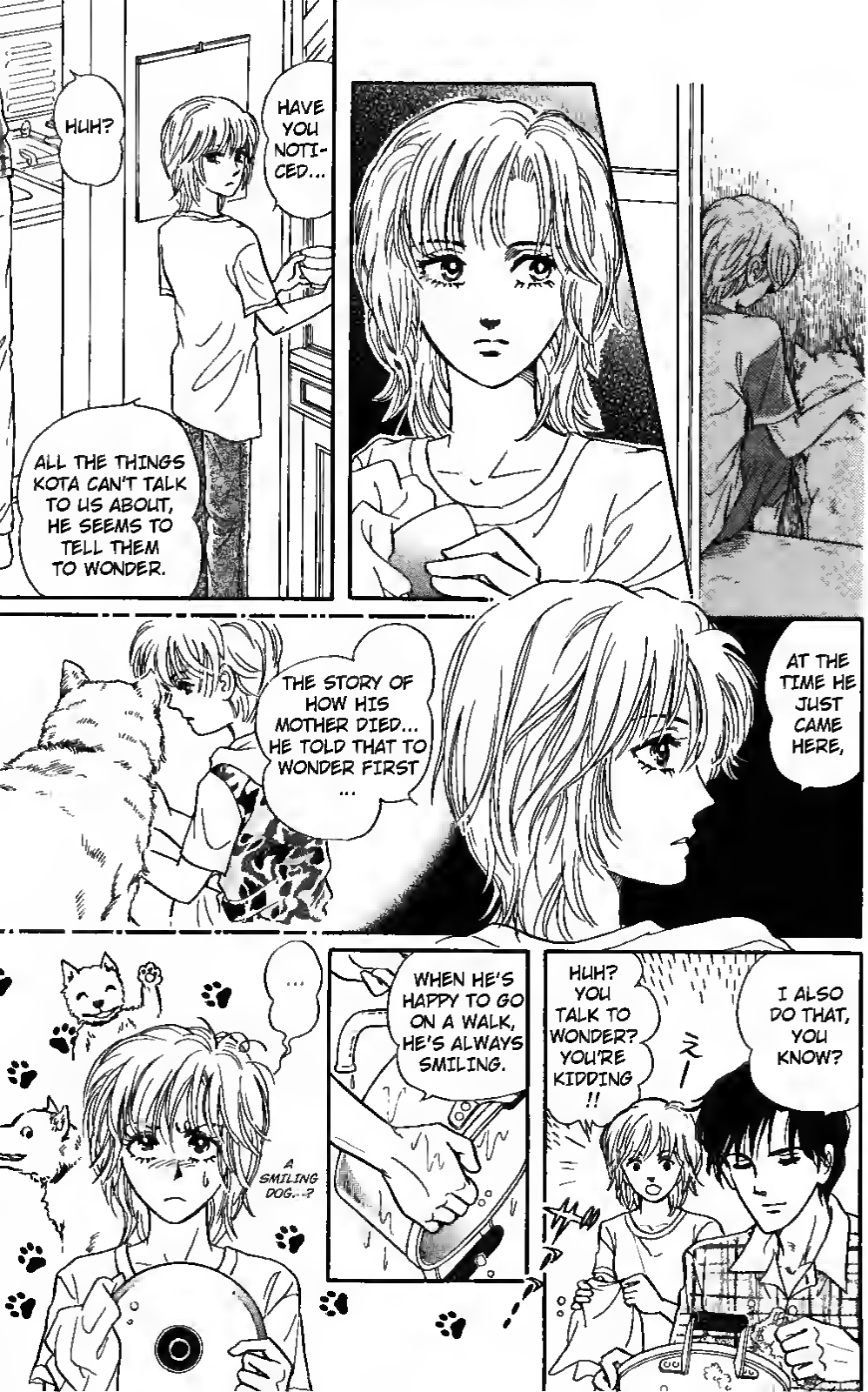
...
ST.
KOTA!
WERE YOU ON THE SAME TRAIN?
YEAH, I HAD TO PLAY A MATCH.
HMM? YOU'RE REALLY DOING YOUR BEST AT BASKETBALL.
AND YOU... HAD ANOTHER DATE WITH THAT GUY FROM WORK?


...AND YOU USED TO BE SO SMALL AND CUTE SIX YEARS AGO...
AND YOU'VE SURE BECOME TALL!
SHUT UP...
NO, TODAY WE HAD TO DO OVERTIME, AND OUR WAY HOME IS IN THE SAME DIRECTION, THAT'S ALL.
...ONLY TODAY?
はは
AH, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH IT? YOU'VE GOTTEN PRETTY DIRECT LATELY, HAVEN'T YOU?
...THE TIME YOU CALLED ME 'AUNTIE', AND YOU WOULDN'T LET GO OF ME...
DO YOU REMEMBER?
WHEN I THINK OF IT, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN THE MOMENT THAT MY MOTHERLY INSTINCT GOT AWAKENED...
IT WAS SUCH A LOVELY MOMENT...
HEY, YOU...
...TO THINK THAT YOU'RE IN THIRD GRADE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NOW...
I'LL PUNCH YOU IF YOU DO!
I'M ONLY THIRTY-ONE!!
IF YOU WANT ME TO CALL YOU AUNTIE, I CAN DO THAT ANY TIME YOU WANT, YOU KNOW...


WONDER, I'M HOME!!
ゆんっ
HEY, WONDER SAYS HE WANTS TO COME IN.
WONDER STAYS OUT-SIDE.
ブブブブブ
TAIYO ALREADY FED HIM, HASN'T HE?
OH, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE TOGETHER!
WHY ARE YOU SO NERVOUSLY PUTTING DOWN THE PHONE?
WERE YOU TALKING TO SOME WOMAN AGAIN? ...MY DEAR HUSBAND ...?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? FOOD'S READY.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE SO POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS...
IS THAT THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR A FATHER?
HUH!!?

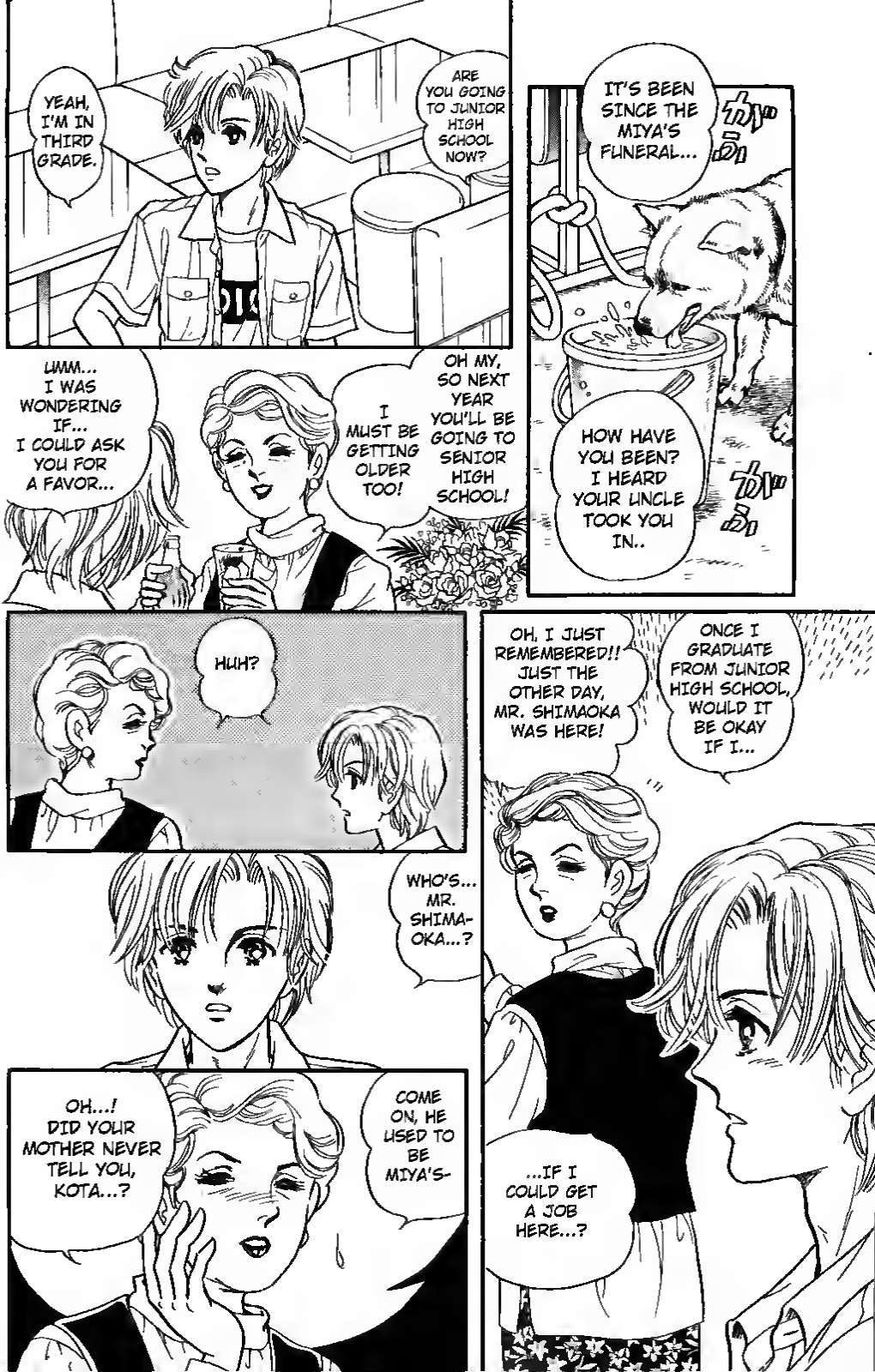

THEY TOLD ME I'M ALREADY TWO MONTHS PREGNANT.
I FOUND OUT BECAUSE OF THE YEARLY HEALTH CHECK AT THE COMPANY.
SO DURING TODAY'S LUNCHBREAK, I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL, TO HAVE IT CHECKED.
HOW CAN IT BE THAT I DIDN'T NOTICE YOU TWO DOING IT, IN A TWO-ROOM HOUSE LIKE THIS!?
WE DID IT WHILE YOU WERE ON YOUR BASKETBALL CAMP, OF COURSE.
WHEN DID YOU DO IT?
DON'T TALK ABOUT THAT...
SO... WILL YOU QUIT YOUR JOB THEN?
WHY?
I HAVEN'T EVEN DECIDED IF I WANT TO GIVE BIRTH TO IT...
KAORI ...
...
I REALLY DON'T KNOW...
AND I REALLY LOVE MY JOB...

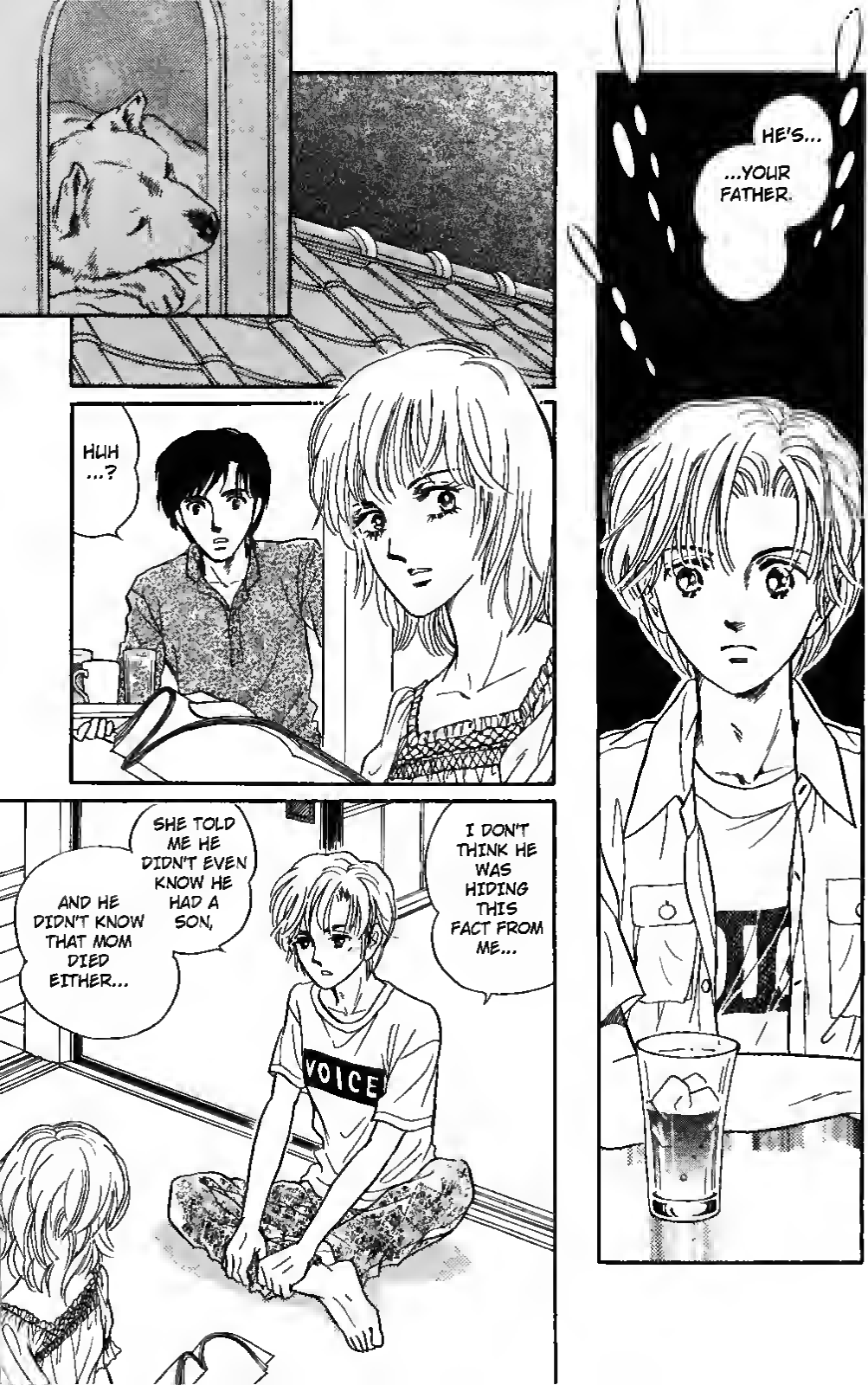
...
ジャラ...
I WONDER IF SHE'S WORRIED BECAUSE OF ME...
SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO, REALLY...
I WAS THINKING TO LEAVE THIS HOUSE AND GET A JOB ANYWAY, ONCE I'M OUT OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.
I CAN'T HAVE THEM TAKE CARE OF ME FOREVER.
NO, YOU CAN'T... YOU'RE THEIR DOG...
I CAN'T TAKE YOU WITH ME.


HUH?
HAVE YOU NOTI-CED...
ALL THE THINGS KOTA CAN'T TALK TO US ABOUT, HE SEEMS TO TELL THEM TO WONDER.
AT THE TIME HE JUST CAME HERE,
THE STORY OF HOW HIS MOTHER DIED... HE TOLD THAT TO WONDER FIRST ...
I ALSO DO THAT, YOU KNOW?
HUH? YOU TALK TO WONDER? YOU'RE KIDDING !!
WHEN HE'S HAPPY TO GO ON A WALK, HE'S ALWAYS SMILING.
...
A SMILING DOG...?

ARE YOU TIRED, WONDER?
DO YOU WANT TO GO HOME ALREADY?
ARE YOU SURE? ALL RIGHT, LET'S TAKE IT EASY THEN.
WE'LL ARRIVE SOON.

NOTE: IN JAPAN, A SNACK BAR, IS ACTUALLY A TYPE OF HOSTESS BAR, WHERE GIRLS ARE PAID TO TALK TO THE MALE CUSTOMERS.
THIS PLACE STILL EXISTS?
OUR APARTMENT WASN'T FAR FROM HERE, SO I OFTEN CAME HERE TO EAT DINNER.
SNACK
アイ
IT FEELS LIKE SUCH A VERY LONG TIME AGO...
KOTA?
OH MY...!
YOU'VE BECOME SO TALL!

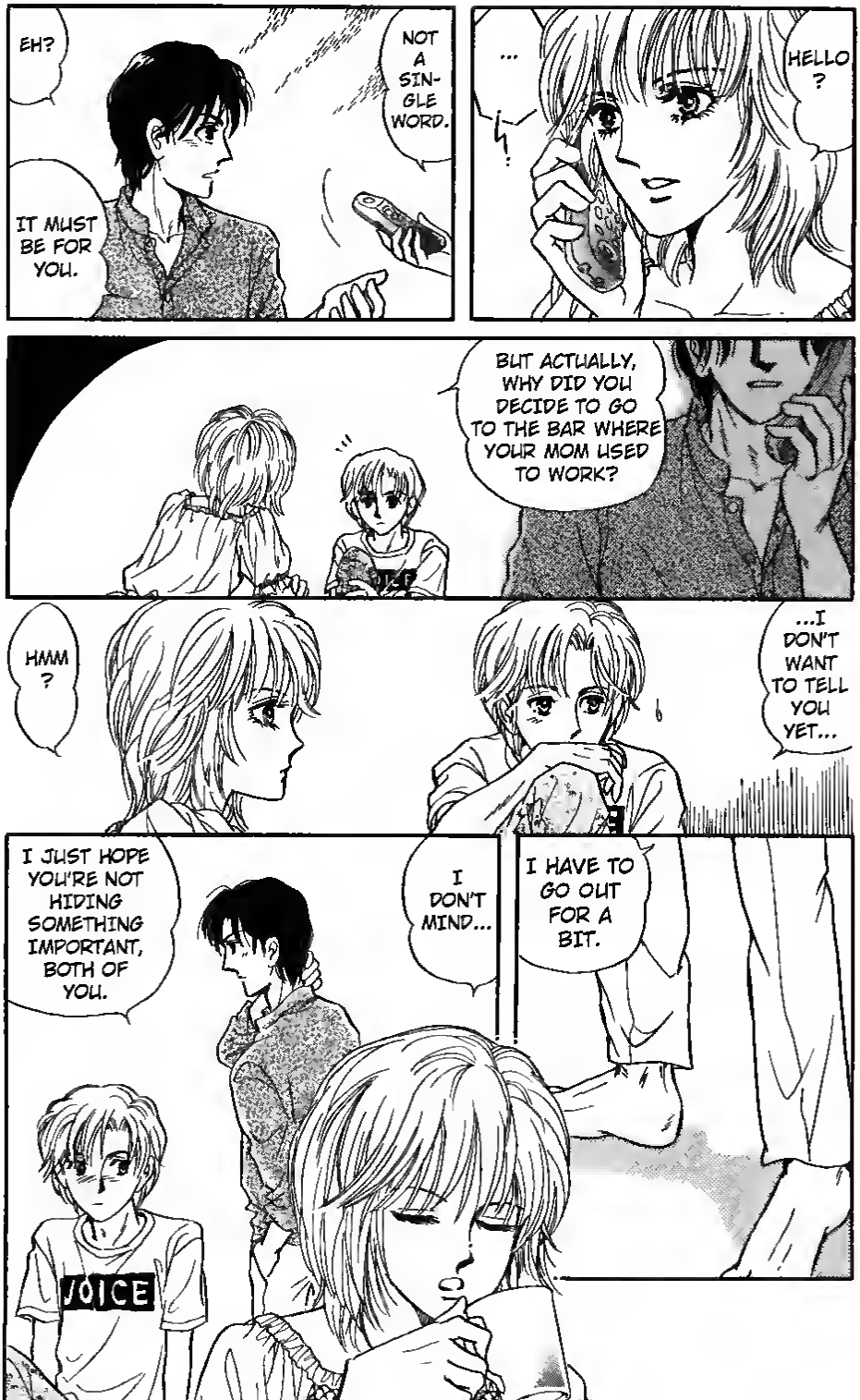

YEAH, I'M IN THIRD GRADE.
ARE YOU GOING TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NOW?
IT'S BEEN SINCE THE MIYA'S FUNERAL...
カッポ
カッポ
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? I HEARD YOUR UNCLE TOOK YOU IN..
UMM... I WAS WONDERING IF... I COULD ASK YOU FOR A FAVOR...
I MUST BE GETTING OLDER TOO!
OH MY, SO NEXT YEAR YOU'LL BE GOING TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL!
HUH?
OH, I JUST REMEMBERED!! JUST THE OTHER DAY, MR. SHIMAOKA WAS HERE!
ONCE I GRADUATE FROM JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, WOULD IT BE OKAY IF I...
WHO'S... MR. SHIMA-OKA...?
...IF I COULD GET A JOB HERE...?
OH...! DID YOUR MOTHER NEVER TELL YOU, KOTA...?
COME ON, HE USED TO BE MIYA'S-

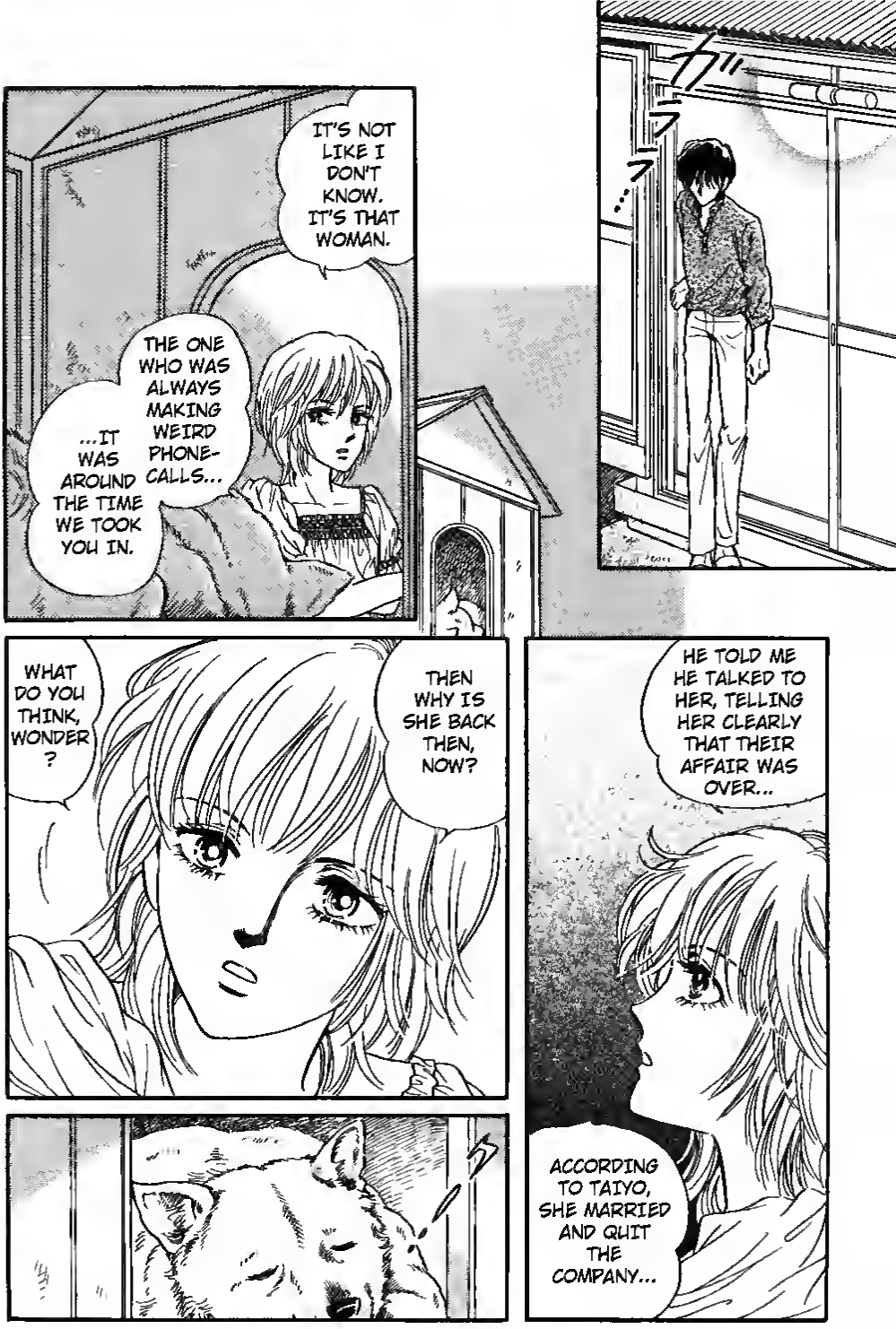

HE'S...
...YOUR FATHER.
HUH ...?
I DON'T THINK HE WAS HIDING THIS FACT FROM ME...
SHE TOLD ME HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE HAD A SON,
AND HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT MOM DIED EITHER...
VOICE

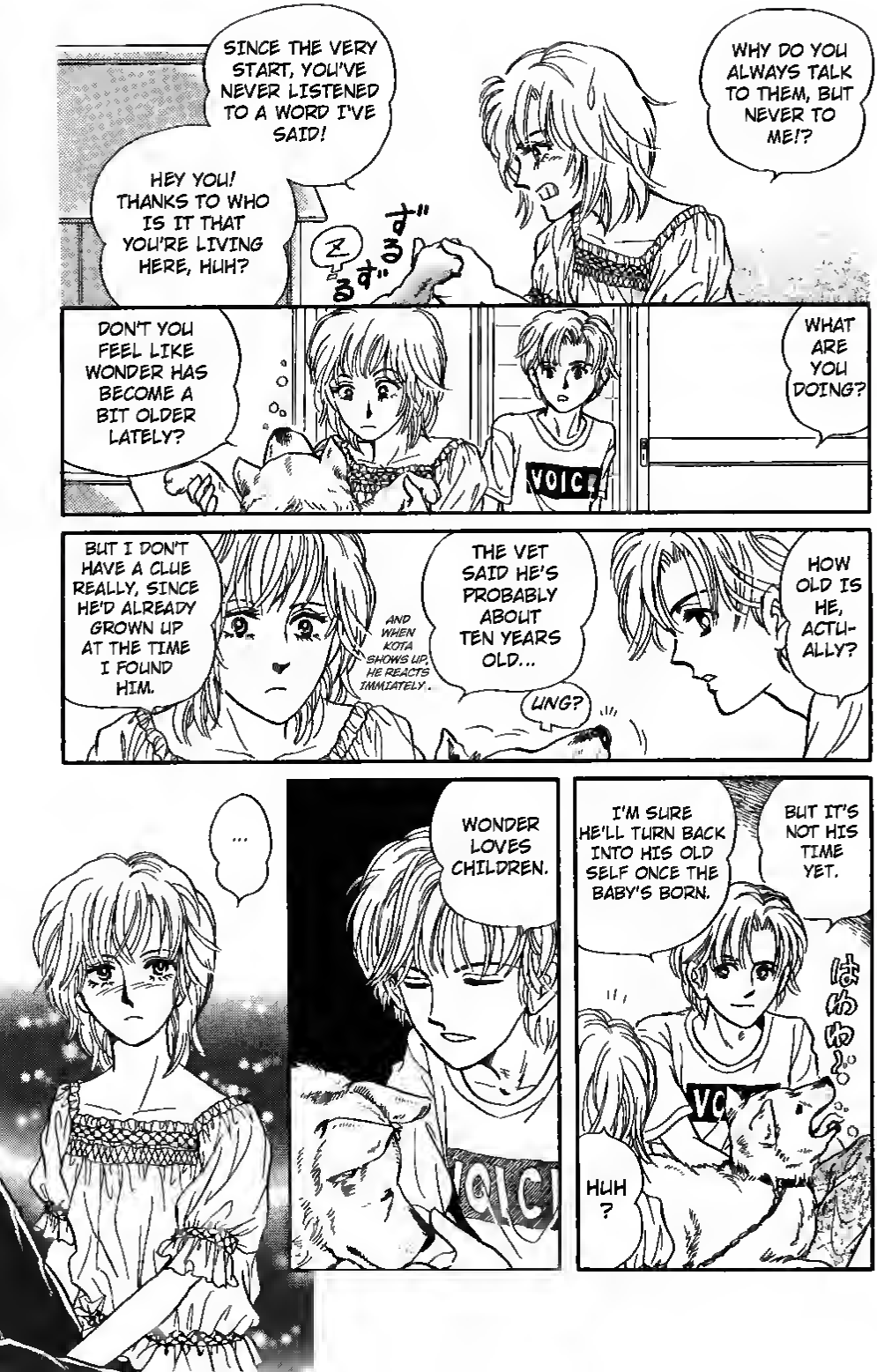
HE GOT TEMPORARILY TRANSFERRED TO THIS AREA FOR HIS JOB.
AND AT THAT TIME HE WAS MARRIED AND HAD A CHILD AT HOME ALREADY...
SO I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY MIYA NEVER TOLD HIM ABOUT YOU...
IT SEEMS THAT RECENTLY HIS CHILD DIED,
SO HE CAME BACK TO THE BAR, ASKING THE LADY ABOUT MY MOTHER, AND FINDING OUT ABOUT ME.
SHE TOLD ME HE WANTS TO MEET ME.
SO... THE LADY GAVE ME HIS CONTACT INFORMATION, JUST IN CASE...
...KOTA, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS?
HMM...
...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO THINK...
AND WONDER ISN'T A GOOD SOURCE OF ADVICE TOO, SINCE HE GETS TIRED SO QUICKLY LATELY...
DID YOU REALLY EXPECT A DOG TO OFFER YOU ADVICE ON THAT?
VOICE

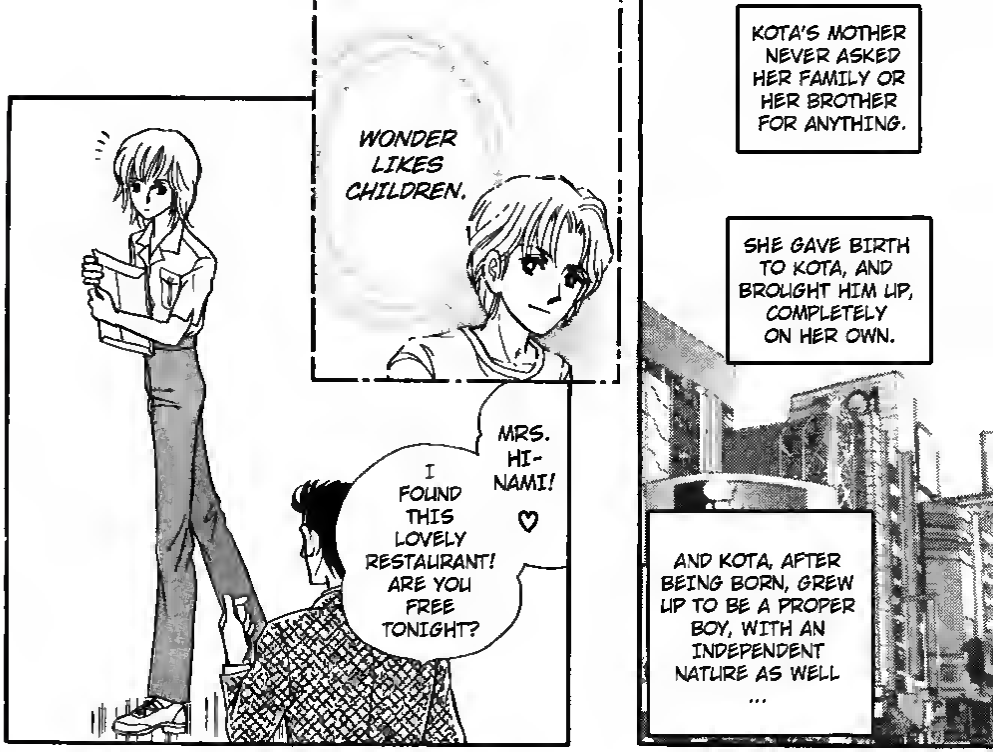
THE THING IS, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW SERIOUS THIS AFFAIR WAS HE HAD WITH YOUR MOM... LET ALONE THE FACT THAT IT'S ALREADY 16 YEARS AGO. SO YOU DON'T KNOW IF HE WOULD REALLY ACCEPT YOU AS HIS OWN SON...
IF HE REALLY WANTS TO TAKE YOU IN, TO REPLACE HIS DEAD CHILD...
ANYWAY, YOU'RE THE ONE TO DECIDE.
IF YOU FEEL LIKE MEETING HIM, JUST GO AHEAD AND DO SO.'
...YOU'LL HAVE A BIG DECISION TO MAKE.
...
THAT WAY OF TALKING ISN'T GOOD Y'KNOW.
THAT'S HOW WE ENDED UP WITH WONDER AS WELL...
I THINK THIS IS JUST SOMETHING THAT WILL UNFOLD ON ITS OWN.
...I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT...
YOU KNOW, IF I WOULD HAVE MADE THINGS COMPLICATED WHEN I WAS 25, I WOULD HAVE NEVER LET A 9 YEAR OLD KID JOIN THE FAMILY JUST LIKE THAT...
WELL, IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU CAN EASILY DECIDE ON JUST LIKE THAT...

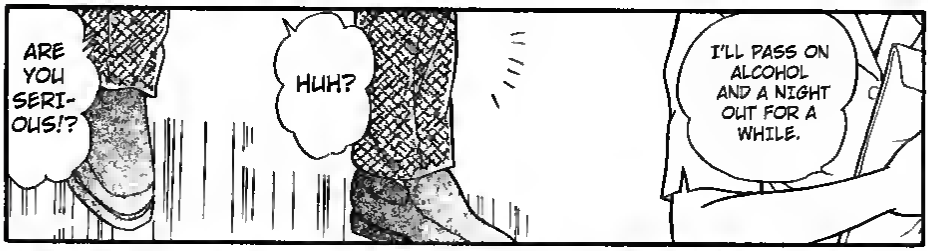
BUT, KOTA,
THERE'S JUST ONE THING,
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LET MY PREGNANCY INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION.
HUH ...
THE REASON WHY I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT THE CHILD, HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.
FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU ARE THINKING YOU WOULDN'T FIT HERE ANYMORE IN CASE WE GOT ANOTHER CHILD...
...I UNDER-STAND.
THAT'S NOT ON MY MIND AT ALL, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS!
I MEAN IT!
...
TRRR...
OH ...
YES? HINAMI SPEA-KING!


EH?
NOT A SIN-GLE WORD.
IT MUST BE FOR YOU.
...
HELLO ?
BUT ACTUALLY, WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO TO THE BAR WHERE YOUR MOM USED TO WORK?
HMM ?
...I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU YET...
I JUST HOPE YOU'RE NOT HIDING SOMETHING IMPORTANT, BOTH OF YOU.
I DON'T MIND...
I HAVE TO GO OUT FOR A BIT.
JOICE


IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T KNOW. IT'S THAT WOMAN.
THE ONE WHO WAS ALWAYS MAKING WEIRD PHONE-CALLS...
...IT WAS AROUND THE TIME WE TOOK YOU IN.
...
HE TOLD ME HE TALKED TO HER, TELLING HER CLEARLY THAT THEIR AFFAIR WAS OVER...
ACCORDING TO TAIYO, SHE MARRIED AND QUIT THE COMPANY...
THEN WHY IS SHE BACK THEN, NOW?
WHAT DO YOU THINK, WONDER?


SINCE THE VERY START, YOU'VE NEVER LISTENED TO A WORD I'VE SAID!
HEY YOU! THANKS TO WHO IS IT THAT YOU'RE LIVING HERE, HUH?
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS TALK TO THEM, BUT NEVER TO ME!?
DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE WONDER HAS BECOME A BIT OLDER LATELY?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BUT I DON'T HAVE A CLUE REALLY, SINCE HE'D ALREADY GROWN UP AT THE TIME I FOUND HIM.
AND WHEN KOTA SHOWS UP, HE REACTS IMMIATELY.
THE VET SAID HE'S PROBABLY ABOUT TEN YEARS OLD...
UNG?
HOW OLD IS HE, ACTUALLY?
...
WONDER LOVES CHILDREN.
I'M SURE HE'LL TURN BACK INTO HIS OLD SELF ONCE THE BABY'S BORN.
BUT IT'S NOT HIS TIME YET.
HUH?


WONDER LIKES CHILDREN.
MRS. HI-NAMI! ♡
I FOUND THIS LOVELY RESTAURANT! ARE YOU FREE TONIGHT?
KOTA'S MOTHER NEVER ASKED HER FAMILY OR HER BROTHER FOR ANYTHING.
SHE GAVE BIRTH TO KOTA, AND BROUGHT HIM UP, COMPLETELY ON HER OWN.
AND KOTA, AFTER BEING BORN, GREW UP TO BE A PROPER BOY, WITH AN INDEPENDENT NATURE AS WELL ...


ARE YOU SERI-OUS!?
HUH?
I'LL PASS ON ALCOHOL AND A NIGHT OUT FOR A WHILE.

I'M PREGNANT, AFTER ALL.
YES, I AM.

MY HUSBAND'S OF COURSE.
WHO'S IS IT ...!!?
W-
I'M NOT YET IN THE STAGE WHERE IT'LL INFLUENCE MY JOB, SO I WON'T BE ON MATERNITY LEAVE ANY TIME SOON.
I ALREADY TOLD THE BOSS.
PHEW...
I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU! YOUR HUSBAND MUST BE DELIGHTED AS WELL!
ISN'T IT TOO COLD IN HERE?
CONGRATULATIONS, MRS. HINAMI!
OH! YOU SHOULDN'T BE CARRYING SOMETHING SO HEAVY?
HUH?
I WONDER IF THAT'S TRUE...
I'VE NEVER REALLY BEEN ABLE TO SEE THROUGH TAIYO'S POKERFACE...
MY HUSBAND EH...
...

BABY K
BABY KID'S
...
TAIYO ?

YOU'RE RIGHT!
...
I WAS JUST THINKING HOW SMALL ALL THESE THINGS LOOK...
BUT BABIES GROW UP IN NO TIME YOU KNOW, JUST LIKE KOTA DID...
BY KID'S
WERE YOU ON YOUR WAY HOME?
YEAH ...
KAORI ...
HOW ABOUT YOU, TAIYO ?
I'M SURE BOTH KOTA AND WONDER WOULD BE GREAT BROTHERS FOR THE BABY.

...TAKE GOOD CARE OF THAT BELLY!
WOW, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU SAID SUCH THINGS, TAIYO.
BECAUSE IT'S NOT ONLY YOUR OWN BODY ANYMORE, NOW!
OH, I GOTTA RUN!
KOTA TOLD ME HE'D BE LATE TODAY, SO I HAVE TO GO FEED WONDER!
DIDN'T I JUST SAY YOU SHOULDN'T RUN LIKE THAT!?
BOBOBO
?
ズッ

HUH?
!
...YOU!
...HAVE TO BE HINAMI'S WIFE...!
WHY DOES A SLUT LIKE YOU...
I'VE ALWAYS CONTINUED TO LOVE HIM... BUT BECAUSE OF YOU...
I WILL NEVER ACCEPT YOUR EXIST-ENCE!
DISAP-PEAR FROM THIS WORLD...!
IF YOU COULD JUST...
SO I GOT A DIVOR-CE...!
I JUST COULDN'T FORGET ABOUT HIM...

KAO-
RI!
STAB

TAI-
YO!!

MY SON WAS A COLLEGE STUDENT AT THE TIME HE PASSED AWAY... SINCE HE DIED, IT'S BEEN GOING DOWNHILL FOR MY WIFE.
MY WIFE SAID SHE WANTS TO MEET YOU...
HIROSHI SHIMAOKA
IF YOU SHOULD EVER FEEL LIKE IT, YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME IN OUR FAMILY.
ブロロロ
...
OF COURSE, I WILL SUPPORT YOUR STUDIES AT HIGH SCHOOL, AS WELL AS COLLEGE, IF YOU HAVE PLANS LIKE THAT.
RATHER THAN HAVING TO RELY ON RELATIVES,
KAORI!?
!

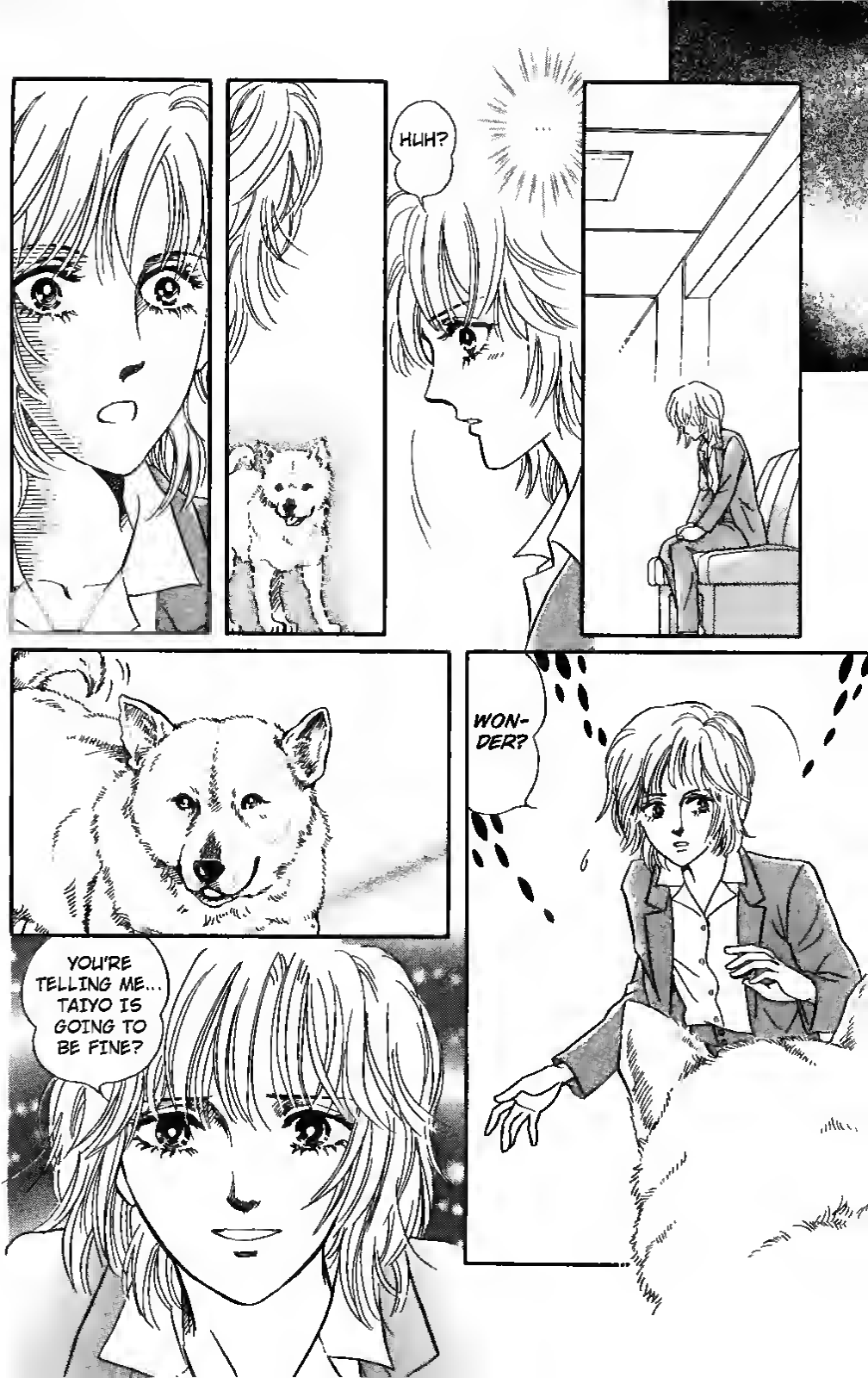
SHE SAID IT WAS MY FAULT ...!
IT WAS ME SHE WANTED TO STAB...
HOSPITAL
OPERATION IN PROGRESS
ISN'T IT TAIYO WHO WAS BEING STALKED BY THAT WOMAN?
WHY DID SHE WANT TO STAB YOU THEN?
SHE SAID IT WOULD BE GOOD IF I JUST DISAP-PEARED...
MAYBE SHE WAS RIGHT...
ALL THIS TIME... I'VE NEVER REALLY DONE ANYTHING USEFUL FOR TAIYO...

HE DIDN'T COMPLAIN EVEN ONCE! HE JUST FOLLOWED MY EXAMPLE...
JUST LIKE THAT, I PUSHED MY OWN IDEALS ONTO HIM.
FROM THE START, I TOLD HIM I WANTED TO RETAIN MY FREEDOM, THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO BE IN A CONSTRICTING RELATION-SHIP.
AND NOW THE BABY...
WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT THAT?
I MET THAT SHIMAOKA GUY TODAY...
YOU KNOW ...
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF TAIYO DIES AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR HIM ...

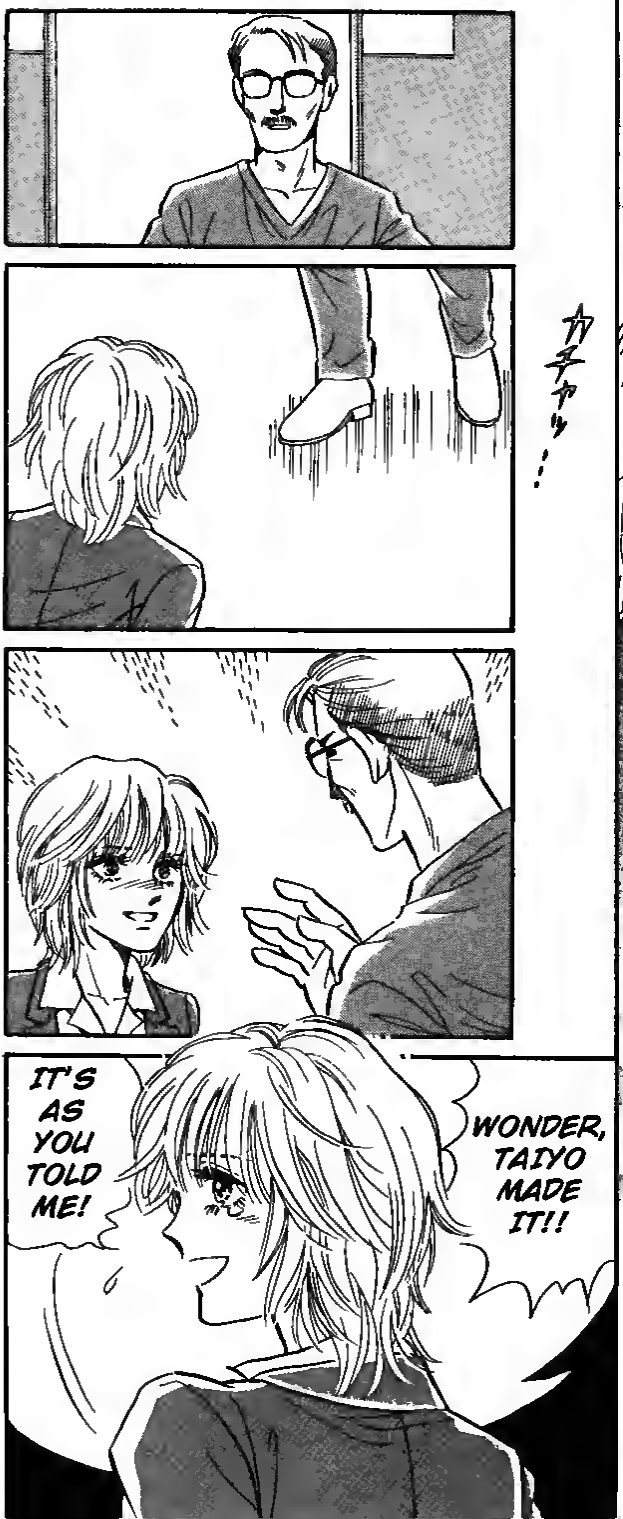
ARE YOU GOING TO LIVE WITH HIM?
YOUR FATHER?
I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY, REALLY...
YOU GUYS WERE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME WHEN I NEEDED YOU...
ISN'T THAT WHAT REAL FAMILY IS SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE?
KOTA...
...IF SOMETHING SHOULD EVER HAPPEN TO TAIYO,
JUST LIKE YOU HELD ME IN YOUR ARMS WHEN I NEEDED IT...
IN THAT CASE, IT WILL BE *MY* TURN TO PROTECT *YOU*.

PROTECT YOU...
PROTECT YOUR BABY...
HUH?
OH... WONDER!
I'LL GO DO IT! I'LL BE BACK RIGHT AWAY!
HE HASN'T BEEN FED YET!
...YEAH.
KAORI, IT'S NOT LIKE TAIYO IS GOING TO DIE, YOU UNDERSTAND?
AH...

ACTUALLY, IT'S NOT THAT HARD OF A DECISION TO MAKE...
TSK, YOU ...
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THIS TO TAIYO?
HE'S YOUR UNCLE, YOU KNOW.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE PART OF THE FAMILY TOO!
WONDER ...
...IS YOUR PRECIOUS BROTHER, ISN'T HE?
WHAT SHOULD I DO...!?
IT'S BEEN KAORI!
FROM THAT MOMENT ON, MY MOST PRECIOUS FAMILY MEMBER HAS BEEN...
WONDER ?
...

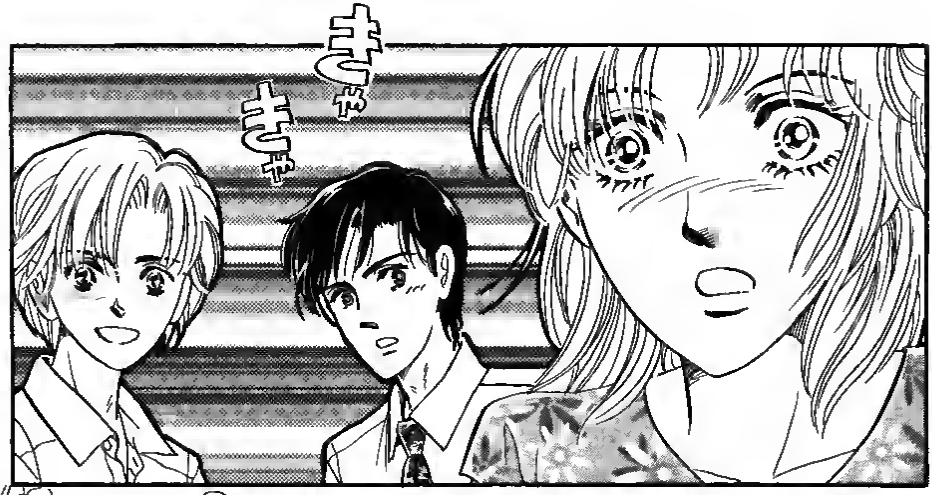

HUH?
WON-
DER?
YOU'RE TELLING ME... TAIYO IS GOING TO BE FINE?

IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE SPOKEN TO ME ISN'T IT.
THIS...
...SINCE THE VERY START.
AND YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN LISTENING TO ME...
YEAH ...


IT'S AS YOU TOLD ME!
WONDER, TAIYO MADE IT!!
ガチャッ!!
...THAT WAS YOU AS WELL!
THE ONE WHO SAVED KOTA, WHEN HE JUST LOST HIS MOTHER...
I'M SO HAPPY,
...YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR US!

WON-
DER?
FROM THAT DAY, WONDER WAS GONE.
MAYBE IT WAS JUST A PHANTOM I SAW,
...GIVING UP HIS LIFE TO SAVE TAIYO, FOR THE SAKE OF THE NEW LIFE THAT'S ABOUT TO BE BORN.

BUT I JUST CHANGED IT!
CAN ANYONE CHANGE MIYA'S DIAPER?
DOESN'T SHE JUST WANT MILK?
SO, A FEW MONTHS LATER...
KOTA STARTED GOING TO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL.
IF I DO IT, I'LL BE LATE AS WELL!
I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU GUYS!
WHAA! IF I STILL HAVE TO BRING HER TO THE NURSERY, I'M GOING TO BE SO LATE FOR WORK!
YEAH... I ALSO SOMETIMES FEEL AS IF I'M CALLING MY SISTER.
ACTUALLY, WHY DID YOU CALL HER AFTER MY MOTHER?
I'M SORRY, I'LL GIVE YOU SOME MILK NOW.
... HUH?



END OF CHAPTER 2

WONDER!

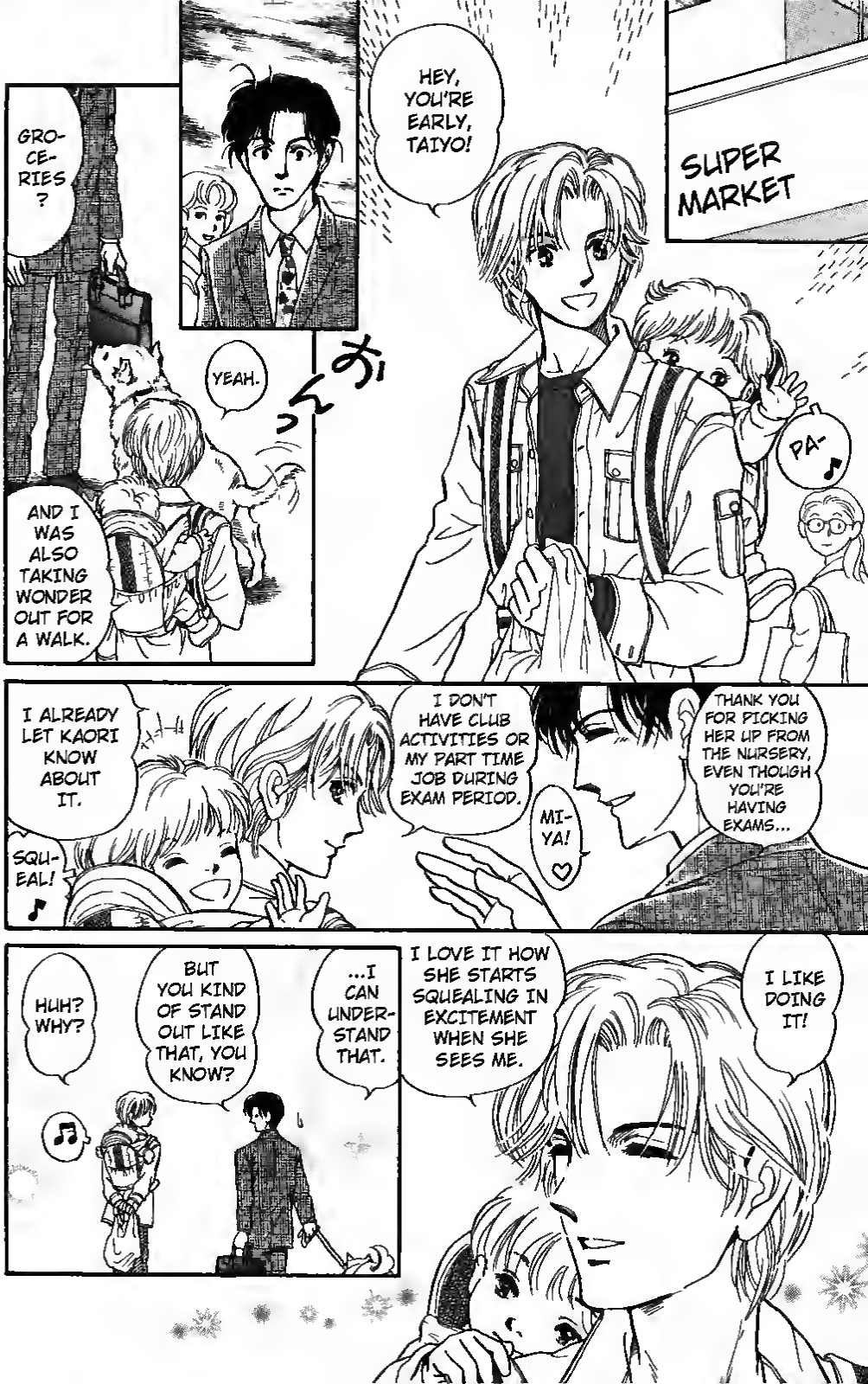
WONDER!

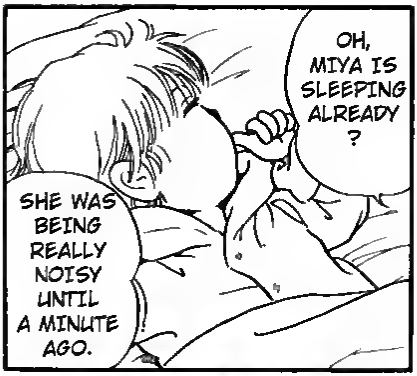
CHAPTER 3

—第3話—

SFX: SUDDEN RUSTLING OF WINGS.

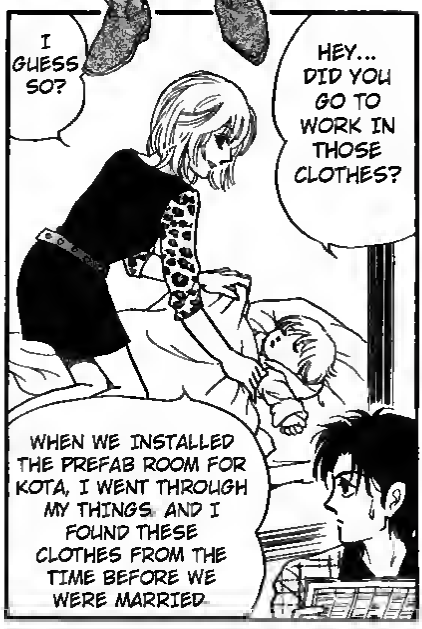
HEY,
EXCUSE ME, LADY.
HUH?


SUPER MARKET
HEY, YOU'RE EARLY, TAIYO!
PA-
GRO-CE-RIES?
YEAH.
うんお
AND I WAS ALSO TAKING WONDER OUT FOR A WALK.
THANK YOU FOR PICKING HER UP FROM THE NURSERY, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE HAVING EXAMS...
I DON'T HAVE CLUB ACTIVITIES OR MY PART TIME JOB DURING EXAM PERIOD.
MI-YA!
I ALREADY LET KAORI KNOW ABOUT IT.
SQU-EAL!
I LOVE IT HOW SHE STARTS SQUEALING IN EXCITEMENT WHEN SHE SEES ME.
I LIKE DOING IT!
...I CAN UNDER-STAND THAT.
BUT YOU KIND OF STAND OUT LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW?
HUH? WHY?

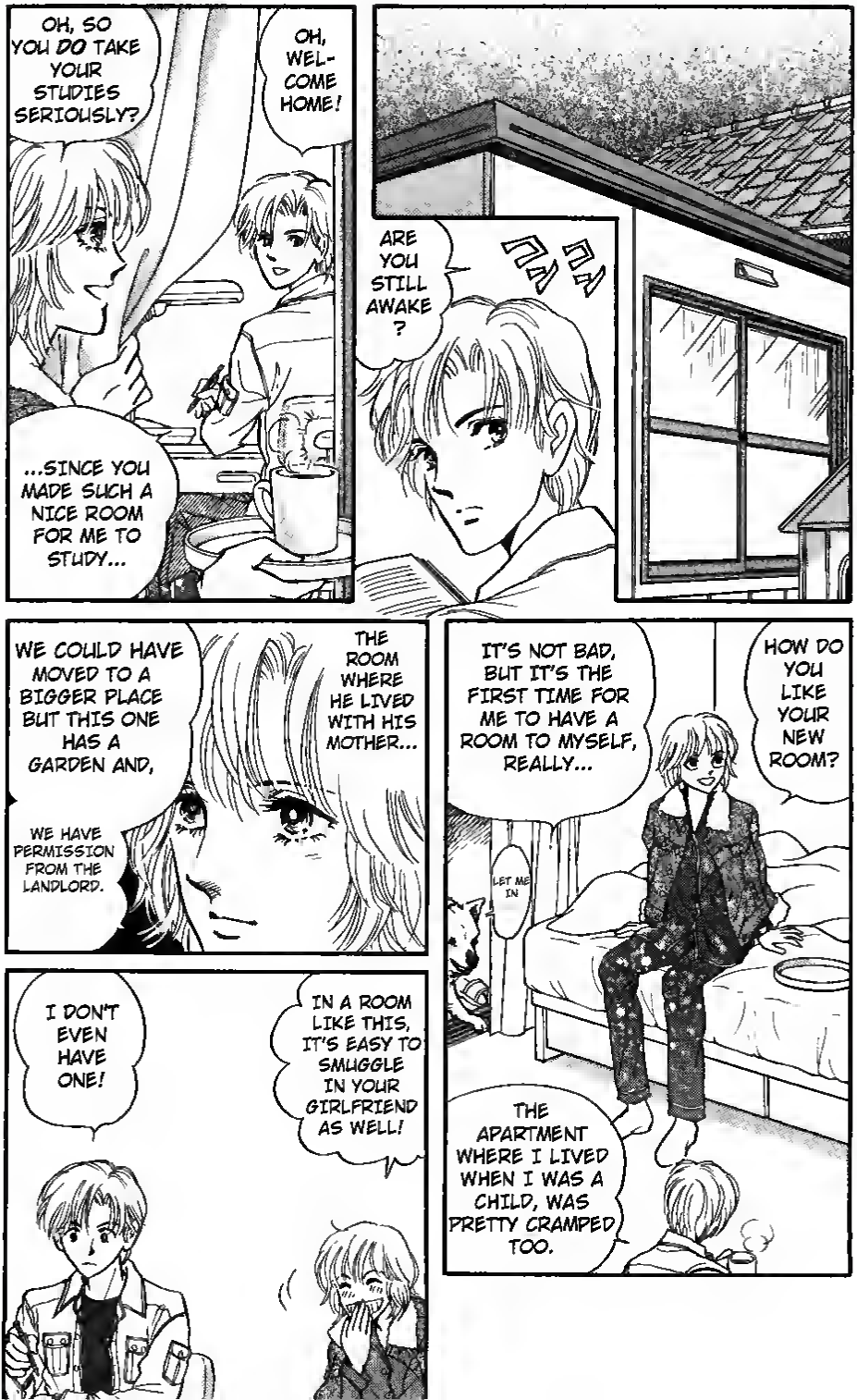

OH, MIYA IS SLEEPING ALREADY ?
SHE WAS BEING REALLY NOISY UNTIL A MINUTE AGO.

I'M HOME!

A 33 YEAR OLD WOMAN WITH A BABY SHOULDN'T BE WEARING CLOTHES LIKE THAT!
I GUESS THAT'S TRUE.
A HIGH SCHOOL KID TRIED TO PICK ME TODAY.


I GUESS SO?
HEY... DID YOU GO TO WORK IN THOSE CLOTHES?
WHEN WE INSTALLED THE PREFAB ROOM FOR KOTA, I WENT THROUGH MY THINGS AND I FOUND THESE CLOTHES FROM THE TIME BEFORE WE WERE MARRIED

A HIGH SCHOOL KID!!?
SHHH! YOU'RE WAKING MIYA UP!
しーっ
I TOLD HIM HE SHOULD BE STUDYING IN THE EXAM PERIOD INSTEAD OF TRYING TO PICK UP RANDOM WOMEN.
HE DIDN'T LOOK LIKE THE DECENT TYPE, THOUGH.
PROBABLY FROM THE SAME SCHOOL AS KOTA.
HE'S JUST THE TYPE OF KID THAT'S HAPPY WITH JUST ENOUGH TO PASS...
WE JUST HAD A CUP OF TEA.
AFTER DINNER, HE WAS JUST PLAYING WITH MIYA.
SO... WHAT DID YOU END UP DOING WITH THIS GUY?
I GET THE IMPRESSION KOTA ISN'T TAKING HIS STUDIES TOO SERIOUS EITHER, ...
LIKE ME!?
ISN'T THAT WHERE HE'S LIKE HIS UNCLE?
ALTHOUGH YOU'VE KIND OF CHANGED SINCE YOU BECAME A DAD.
うーん
AND HE DOESN'T REALLY SEEM TO PUT THAT MUCH IMPORTANCE ON BASKETBALL EITHER.
IS IT NORMAL FOR A 17 YEAR OLD TO BE SO CHILLED OUT ABOUT EVERYTHING?


OH, SO YOU DO TAKE YOUR STUDIES SERIOUSLY?
OH, WELCOME HOME!
...SINCE YOU MADE SUCH A NICE ROOM FOR ME TO STUDY...
ARE YOU STILL AWAKE?
WE COULD HAVE MOVED TO A BIGGER PLACE BUT THIS ONE HAS A GARDEN AND,
THE ROOM WHERE HE LIVED WITH HIS MOTHER...
WE HAVE PERMISSION FROM THE LANDLORD.
IT'S NOT BAD, BUT IT'S THE FIRST TIME FOR ME TO HAVE A ROOM TO MYSELF, REALLY...
HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR NEW ROOM?
LET ME IN
THE APARTMENT WHERE I LIVED WHEN I WAS A CHILD, WAS PRETTY CRAMPED TOO.
I DON'T EVEN HAVE ONE!
IN A ROOM LIKE THIS, IT'S EASY TO SMUGGLE IN YOUR GIRLFRIEND AS WELL!

YOU MUST BE KIDDING!! AT LEAST ONE GIRL SHOULD HAVE ASKED YOU OUT BY NOW!
GIVE ME A BREAK!
CAN'T YOU START ACTING LIKE A BOY YOUR AGE FOR JUST A LITTLE!!?
AREN'T THERE ANY GIRLS YOU LIKE IN YOUR CLASS?
...BUT THE GIRL I LIKE IS YOU, KAORI.
HUH?
THE LADY FROM THE BAR WHERE I DO MY PART-TIME JOB...
SHE TOLD ME SHE'D HIRE ME FOR REAL WHEN I GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL, IF I WOULD WANT THAT.
EH...?
AT THE MOMENT, I JUST WASH DISHES AND DO SOME OTHER THINGS IN THE BACK.
BUT SHE TOLD ME IF I START DOING REAL BAR WORK, THE AMOUNT OF FEMALE CUSTOMERS WOULD RISE.
AND I DON'T THINK I WOULD DISLIKE THAT KIND OF WORK.
YOU KNOW, KOTA...
SO I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE IN THE FUTURE I COULD OPEN A BAR ON MY OWN.
LOOK, KOTA, I KNOW IT WAS THE BAR WHERE YOUR MOTHER USED TO WORK,
SO WE'RE NOT REALLY AGAINST IT IF YOU WANT TO WORK THERE PART TIME, BUT...

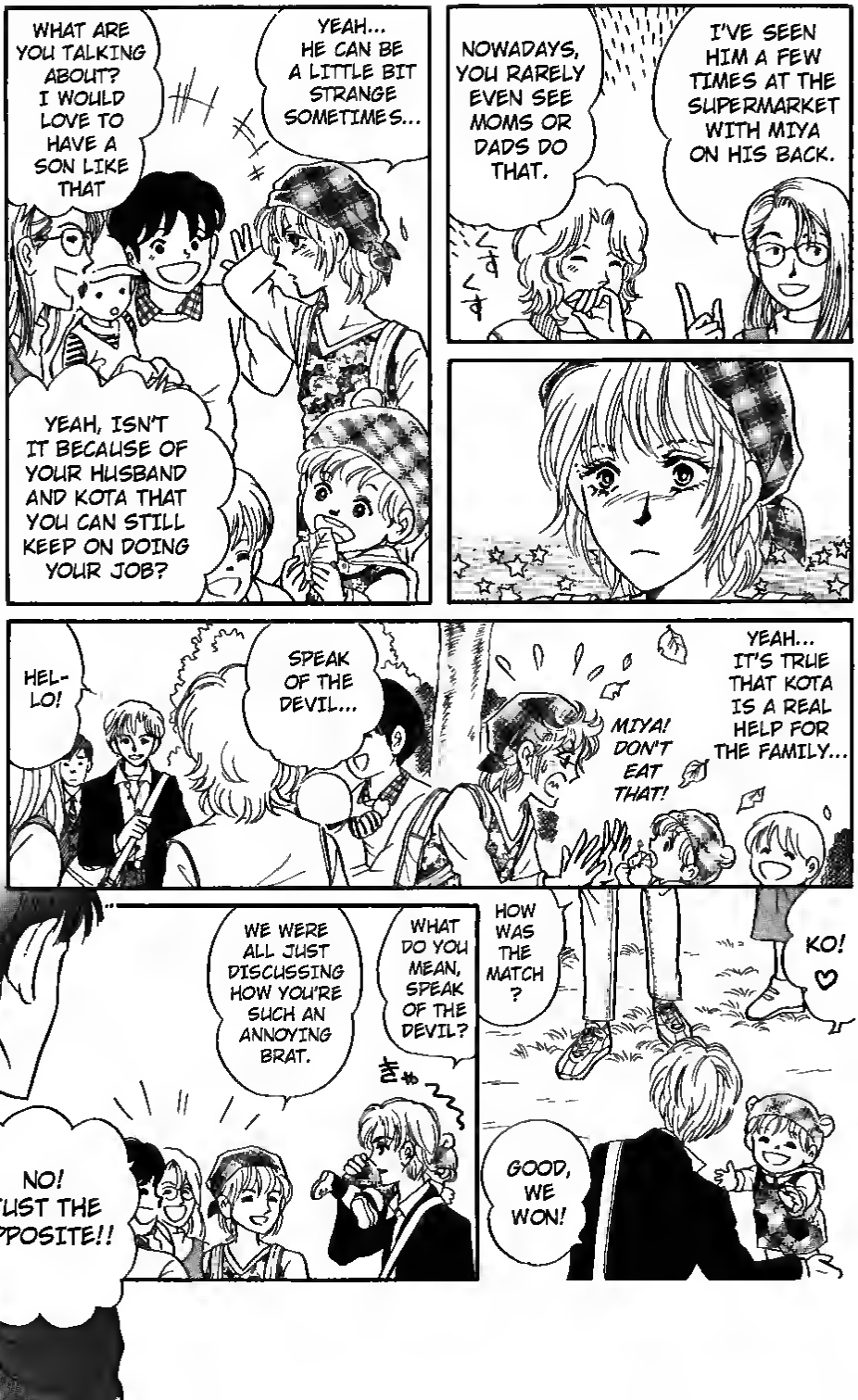
HEY... AREN'T YOU GETTING A LITTLE BIT OUT OF TOUCH WITH SCHOOL LIFE?
わい
わい
THAT DIDN'T SEEM TO BE TRUE...
HINAMI, DO YOU KNOW THE SOLUTION TO THIS ONE?
I SEE, SO THAT'S WHERE I MADE A MISTAKE...
ドン
OH!
AH... I'M SORRY!
YEAH, I'M GOING THERE NOW.
HINAMI, I'LL SEE YOU IN THE CLUBROOM LATER.

HEY, HINAMI !!
AH WELL... THAT'S JUST BECAUSE THE THIRD-GRADERS HAVE ALL RETIRED.
IT'S SO AMAZING THAT YOU'RE IN THE STARTING LINEUP!
EVEN SO, IF YOU COMPARE THAT TO ME...
ARE YOU GOING TO BASKETBALL PRACTISE NOW?
YEAH, WE'RE HAVING A MATCH NEXT SUNDAY.
BUT I DON'T HAVE A CELL-PHONE.
I TOLD YOU MY ADDRESS THE OTHER DAY, SO WHY AREN'T YOU AT LEAST SENDING ME A LITTLE TEXT.
HI-NAMI !!
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT AGE WE'RE LIVING IN? CAN'T YOU AT LEAST GET YOURSELF A CELL-PHONE!?
AH, WHO CARES?

WHAAAHAAAHAAA!!

HOW IS SHE?
BUT IT WAS VERY SCARY FOR HER. A BY-PASSER JUST PUNCHED HER FOR NO REASON AND WALKED AWAY, SHE SAID...
WELL... SHE'S NOT THAT BADLY HURT...
HUH?
SOMEONE SAID SHE ONCE SAW A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RUNNING AWAY WHEN SHE ENTERED THE PARK.
I JUST HOPE THIS DOESN'T ESCALATE...
WE ALSO DON'T KNOW YET WHO HAS BEEN KILLING THOSE PIGEONS LATELY.
YEAH, AND HE SEEMS TO BE TAKING GOOD CARE OF MIYA TOO!
IF ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WOULD BE LIKE YOUR BOY KOTA, THE WORLD WOULD BE A MORE PEACEFUL PLACE.
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ...?
DON'T FIGHT!

WONDER!


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE A SON LIKE THAT
YEAH... HE CAN BE A LITTLE BIT STRANGE SOMETIMES...
YEAH, ISN'T IT BECAUSE OF YOUR HUSBAND AND KOTA THAT YOU CAN STILL KEEP ON DOING YOUR JOB?
NOWADAYS, YOU RARELY EVEN SEE MOMS OR DADS DO THAT.
I'VE SEEN HIM A FEW TIMES AT THE SUPERMARKET WITH MIYA ON HIS BACK.
HEL-LO!
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL...
MIYA! DON'T EAT THAT!
YEAH... IT'S TRUE THAT KOTA IS A REAL HELP FOR THE FAMILY...
WE WERE ALL JUST DISCUSSING HOW YOU'RE SUCH AN ANNOYING BRAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SPEAK OF THE DEVIL?
NO! JUST THE OPPOSITE!!
HOW WAS THE MATCH?
KO!
GOOD, WE WON!

...
HE'S IN MY CLASS. HIS NAME IS AIKAWA.
WHO IS HE?
ペコ
OH, HE CAME TO WATCH MY MATCH.
SO YOU DID HAVE FRIENDS AT SCHOOL!?
OHH! SO YOU'RE ONE OF KOTA'S CLASS-MATES!?
ARE YOU ALSO IN THE BASKETBALL CLUB?
YOU SEE, OUR BOY NEVER BRINGS FRIENDS HOME...
N-NO...
HEY! YOU'RE FORGETTING YOUR CHILD AND THE BUGGY...
OUR HOME IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!!
IT'S JUST THAT OUR WAY HOME WAS IN THE SAME DIRECTION...
YOU'RE WELCOME ANY TIME YOU FEEL LIKE COMING!

WHA!
WON-DER, NO!
おん
おんっ
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU? WHY ARE YOU ALL WET?
WE'RE HOME! AND WE'RE HAVING A GUEST!!
HUH?
じゃば
じゃば
TAIYO, SHUT OFF THE HOSE!
どぅ
たたた
DON'T GET ON MY BED WITH THOSE MUDDY PAWS!!
NO, WON-DER !!
WELL, I HAD NOTHING TO DO, SO I THOUGHT I'D GIVE HIM A SHOWER... BUT THEN HE SUDDENLY RAN INTO YOUR ROOM!
AH!
WHAH! MY ROOM IS COMPLETELY WET!!
AIKAWA, CAN YOU TAKE THE CHILD AND WAIT INSIDE THE HOUSE FOR A SECOND?
O-OKAY.

WOOF
WOOF
...!
...
GET A BUCKET!
I WISH HE WOULD HAVE STAYED FOR DINNER
THAT AIKAWA ...
HE SEEMS TO BE THE QUIET TYPE EH...

I SAID HE'S A CLASS-MATE.
ISN'T HE A FRIEND ?
IT'S NOTHING LIKE YOU THINK...
WHO KNOWS ...
DOES HE LIVE CLOSE BY?
I'VE NEVER REALLY TALKED TO HIM, REALLY.
IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S SO MUCH TO TALK ABOUT AT SCHOOL...
YOU KNOW...
AAAH... SO YOU DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS AFTER ALL...
SIGH
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE 17 YOUR ONLY POPULAR WITH MIDDLE AGED WOMAN, WHAT'S THAT ABOUT!
WHA!!
YOU'RE WRONG, KOTA!
AH... I'M GOING TO MY PART-TIME JOB.
SEE? MIYA AGREES WITH US.
WANS
HUH
HUH
DON'T USE YOUR DAUGHTER LIKE THAT!
IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHARE WORRIES AND HELP FRIENDS OF THE SAME AGE.

OHH! SO YOU'RE ONE OF KOTA'S CLASS-MATES!?
Your dinner is in the fridge. You can warm it up in the microwave
ZAAA

WHAT'S GOING ON?
OH...
HEY, SHOULDN'T WE JUST KEEP IT AT THAT?
HM?
HAS THE TEACHER COME?
N-NO... BUT...
HINAMI? WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO DO WITH THIS?
JUST STOP IT, OKAY!?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, IKUMI!?
...
ARE YOU OKAY?
I- IT'S NOTHING REALLY...
IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHARE WORRIES AND HELP FRIENDS OF THE SAME AGE.
...!
TAIYO MUST HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT TIMES LIKE THESE...
HEY... IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?

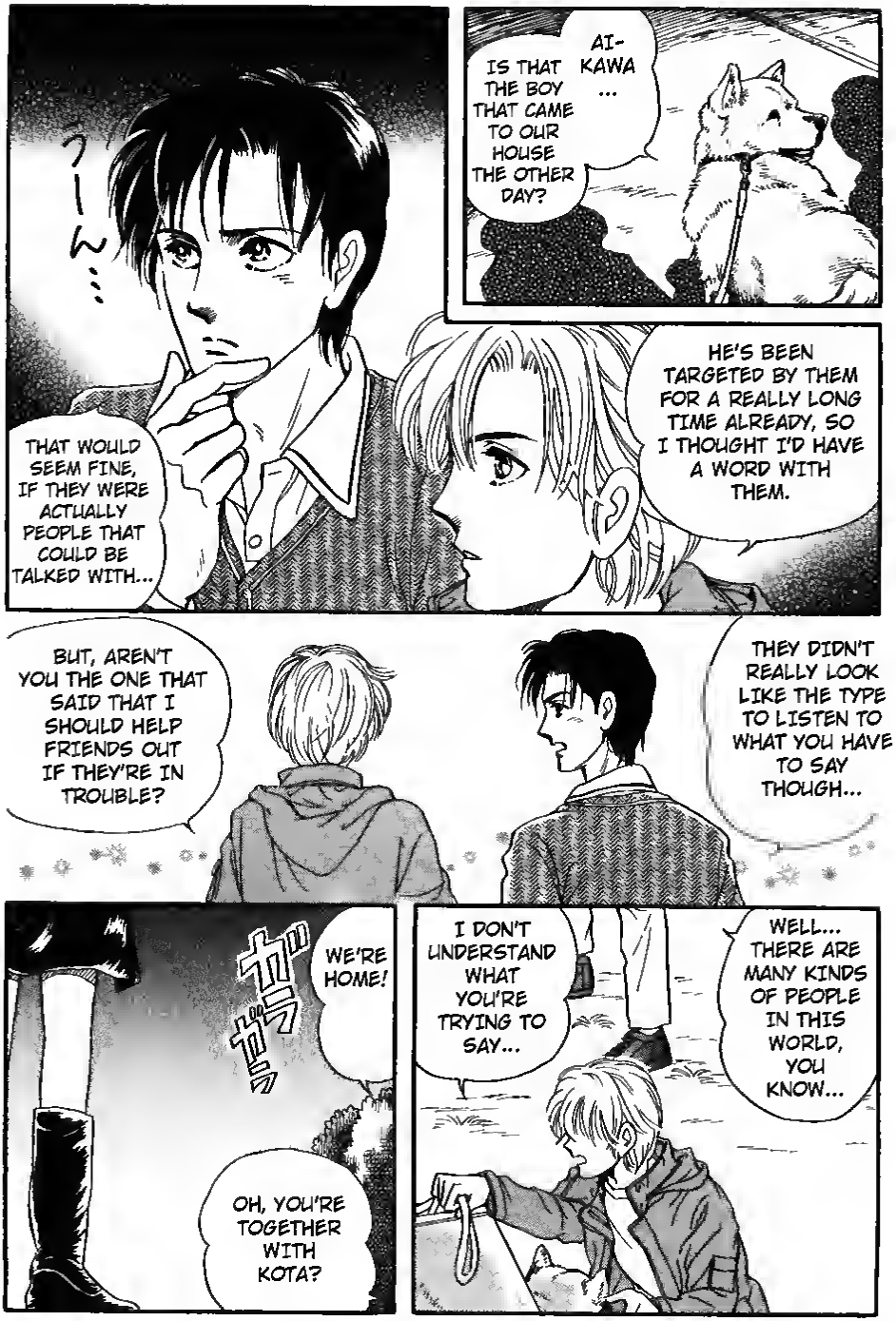
I'M FINE, WE'VE BEEN IN THE SAME CLASS SINCE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL...
THEY'VE BEEN DOING THAT TO ME FOR AGES, JUST FOR NO REASON.
HUH ?
WELL, IT'S JUST ...
IF THERE'S STUFF THAT'S WORRYING YOU OR ANYTHING ...
...I WAS JUST WONDERING IF I COULD BE OF ANY HELP TO YOU.
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT... YOU'RE GOOD AT EVERYTHING YOU DO, AND EVERYONE LIKES YOU, BUT I'M NOT LIKE YOU, HINAMI!
HEY...
WHY ARE YOU JUST ALLOWING THEM TO DO THAT?
THAT'S JUST HORRI-BLE!
IF YOU DON'T WORK IT OUT THEN IT'LL NEVER GET SOLVED.
HEY, HINAMI!
I'M NOT GOOD AT STUDYING, I'M SLOW AT JUST ABOUT ANYTHING, AND GIRLS IGNORE ME...

AND THAT AFTER WE CHEERED YOU ON THE WHOLE TIME!
THAT'S SO MEAN!
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOU GUYS WERE IN THE CROWD.
THESE ARE THE PICTURES WE TOOK FROM YOUR LAST MATCH!
YOU LOOK SO COOL IN THEM!
WHEN DID YOU TAKE THOSE?
...
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, IKUMI?
AREN'T YOU SKIPPING SCHOOL WITH US?
NO-THING...
"AH, WHO CARES?"
WHY DIDN'T YOU TEXT ME!?
AND YET HE'S ALL OVER THE OTHER GIRLS.

I'LL BE HEADING HOME.
BE CAREFUL ON THE WAY!
SNACK BAR AT アイ
HMM? I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WORKED AT A PLACE LIKE THIS.
I WOULD HAVE NEVER EXPECTED FOR A GUY LIKE YOU.
...
HEY, YOU REALLY PISSED ME OFF THAT TIME, YOU KNOW.
I'D LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU!
...I DON'T MIND.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT TOO.

HEY, WONDER !!
WHAT'S WRONG, WONDER?
OUR HOUSE IS NOT THAT WAY!
AH!
KOTA ?
おんっ

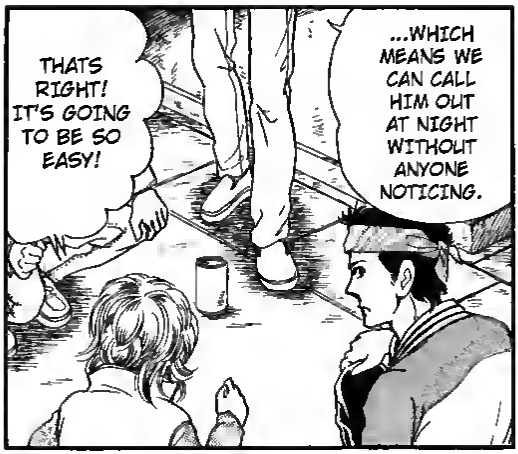
HMMM?
NO-THING.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
!
I WAS JUST IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME-THING...
YOU STUPID !!
THE TIME THAT MINORS SHOULD BE OUT ON THE STREET HAS PASSED HOURS AGO!
YOU KNOW, IT'S LATE AL-READY.
AND YOUR JOB IS FINISHED, SO LET'S GO HOME.
EH...
...THAT'S WHAT THE DOG THINKS... SO LET'S GO!
...!
THIS GEEZER...


AI-KAWA ...
IS THAT THE BOY THAT CAME TO OUR HOUSE THE OTHER DAY?
うーん...
HE'S BEEN TARGETED BY THEM FOR A REALLY LONG TIME ALREADY, SO I THOUGHT I'D HAVE A WORD WITH THEM.
THAT WOULD SEEM FINE, IF THEY WERE ACTUALLY PEOPLE THAT COULD BE TALKED WITH...
BUT, AREN'T YOU THE ONE THAT SAID THAT I SHOULD HELP FRIENDS OUT IF THEY'RE IN TROUBLE?
THEY DIDN'T REALLY LOOK LIKE THE TYPE TO LISTEN TO WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY THOUGH...
ガラガラ
WE'RE HOME!
OH, YOU'RE TOGETHER WITH KOTA?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY...
WELL... THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD, YOU KNOW...

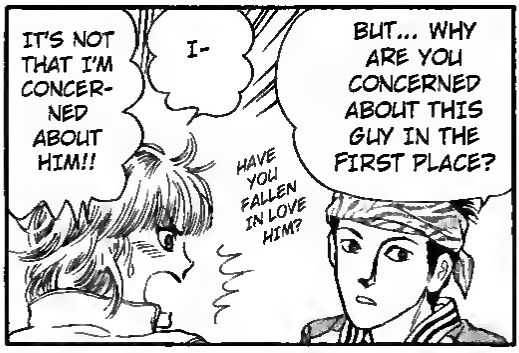
EH?
OH...
ISN'T SHE AT SCHOOL TODAY?
ガラ
HUH? WHAT?
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT IKUMI?
THERE WAS SOMETHING SHE WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT YESTERDAY, BUT SOMETHING CAME UP...
I WAS WONDERING WHAT...

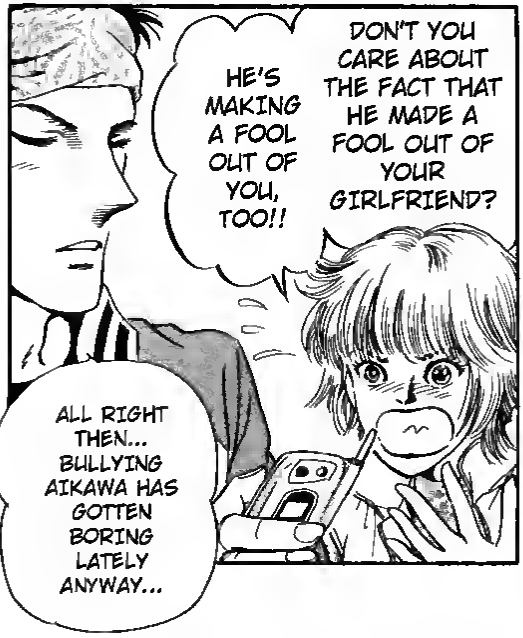
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING?
YOU FOOL!
YOU'D BETTER REMEMBER THAT IKUMI IS SAWAKI'S GIRLFRIEND!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SO WHAT?
SO WHAT?
IKUMI IS PISSED THAT YOU MADE HER LOSE FACE.
H-HE'S LIKE THE LEADER OF THIS GROUP...
SAWA-KI?
WHAT DID I DO TO HER?
LOSE FACE ...?
HUH!?
AND YOU DIDN'T TEXT HER OR ANYTHING...
SHE MUST BE TRYING TO GET SAWAKI TO TAKE REVENGE ON YOU FOR HER...
I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT SHE KIND OF LIKES YOU...
SO WHEN SHE GAVE YOU HER CONTACT INFORMATION...

I DON'T SEE ANY REASON TO FIGHT OVER THIS.
HUH ?
ONCE THEY HAVE THEIR EYE ON YOU...
THIS IS REALLY BAD, HINAMI.
AH, THIS SITUATION SUCKS, BUT I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE BUT TO CLEAR THIS UP.
THERE'S ALREADY A GIRL I LIKE, YOU SEE.
KAORI
YOU'RE SAYING THE SAME STUFF AS A 30 PLUS YEAR OLD GEEZER.
TAIYO
WE'LL SEE, WE'LL SEE.
THEY'RE NOT THE KIND OF PEOPLE YOU CAN JUST HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH, YOU KNOW!?
DOESN'T HE REALIZE THE HELL THAT THOSE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PUTTING ME THROUGH?
HOW CAN HE BE SO CALM ABOUT IT?
...
...HOW CAN HE EVER BE ABLE TO IMAGINE WHAT A WEAKLING LIKE ME HAS GONE THROUGH?
?
...FOR A GUY WHO'S LOVED BY EVERYONE AROUND HIM... FOR A GUY WHO THINKS EVERYTHING WILL ALWAYS GO THE WAY HE PLANS...


THATS RIGHT! IT'S GOING TO BE SO EASY!
...WHICH MEANS WE CAN CALL HIM OUT AT NIGHT WITHOUT ANYONE NOTICING.

AND YOU KNOW ...
IT SEEMS LIKE HIS ROOM IS A LITTLE PREFAB BUILDING,
SEPARATED FROM HIS FAMILIES' MAIN HOUSE.


IT'S NOT THAT I'M CONCER-NED ABOUT HIM!!
I-
BUT... WHY ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THIS GUY IN THE FIRST PLACE?
HAVE YOU FALLEN IN LOVE HIM?


HE'S MAKING A FOOL OUT OF YOU, TOO!!
DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE MADE A FOOL OUT OF YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
ALL RIGHT THEN... BULLYING AIKAWA HAS GOTTEN BORING LATELY ANYWAY...

UMM ...
SO... WHAT'S HIS NUMBER?
TRRRR
RRR...
KOTA!
CAN YOU PICK UP THE PHONE?
きゃはは!
SURE!
WOOF WOOF!!
MIYA, BE STILL! YOU'LL CATCH A COLD, YOU KNOW!?
WONDER HAS GONE TO SLEEP ALREADY, DEAR.
DON'T CATCH A COLD!
SNEEZE!
I'M GOING OUT FOR A BIT.

YOU CAN STAY HERE, WONDER.
I'LL TAKE YOU FOR A WALK TOMORROW MORNING.
HUH? DIDN'T YOU JUST COME HOME FROM YOUR PART-TIME JOB?
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
WHO WAS THAT ON THE PHONE?
ALL RIGHT, SEE YOU LATER!
...?
WOOF WOOF!!

PLEASE COME HERE RIGHT NOW!
AT THE PARK...
SAWAKI AND THE OTHERS ASKED ME FOR YOUR PHONE NUMBER...
AI-KAWA...?

ナ
ワン
ワン
WHAT'S UP WITH WONDER?
OH, TAIYO,
DIDN'T YOU SEE KOTA ON YOUR WAY HERE?

END OF CHAPTER 3

WONDER!

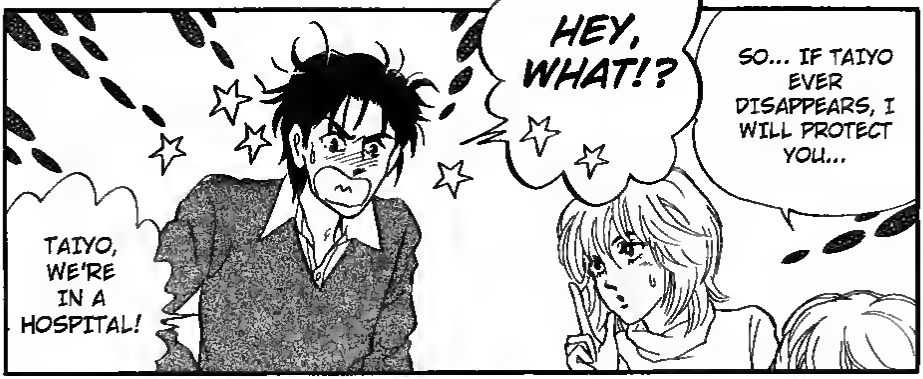
WONDER!

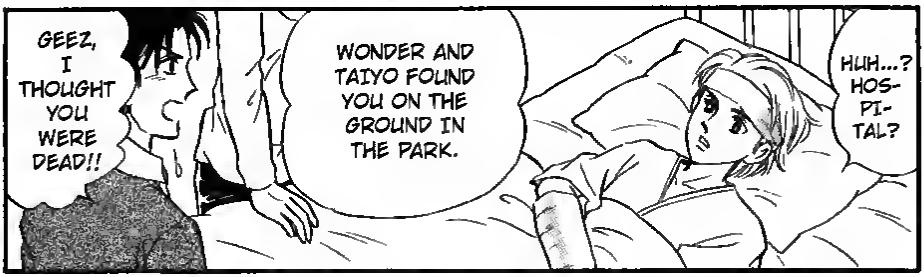
CHAPTER 4

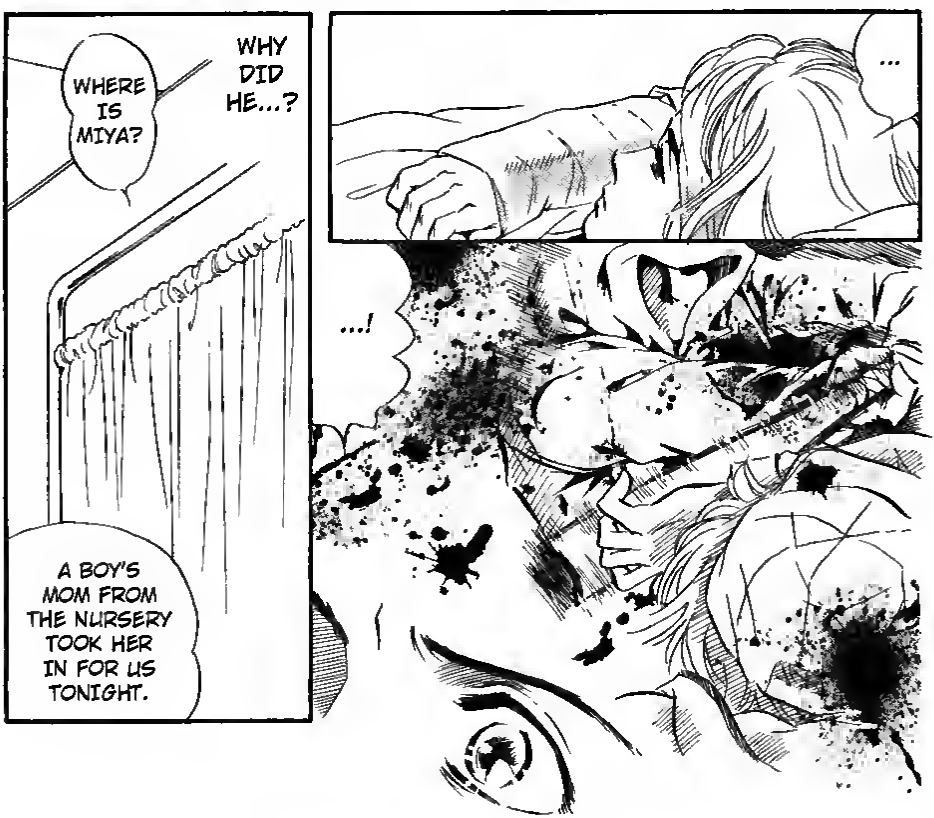
OH ...
I SEE ...

WHEN I GO TO PICK HER UP AT NURSERY,
WHY DID IT MAKE ME FEEL SO HAPPY TO SEE MIYA SO HAPPY TO SEE ME ...
IT'S BECAUSE HER FEELING OF WAITING FOR HER FAMILY,
AND MY FEELING FROM THAT TIME WERE THE SAME.
BARK BARK ワン！ワン！
WON-DER ?
I HAVE TO WAKE UP.
OH RIGHT, I PROMISED I WOULD TAKE HIM FOR A WALK IN THE MORNING...
KOTA!
...I'M GETTING UP RIGHT AWAY!
I KNOW...

MOM?
I-
I ALWAYS THOUGHT I LOVED YOU AS A WOMAN, KAORI...
HUH !?
KOTA ?
...


TAIYO, WE'RE IN A HOSPITAL!
HEY, WHAT!?
SO... IF TAIYO EVER DISAPPEARS, I WILL PROTECT YOU...


GEEZ, I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!!
WONDER AND TAIYO FOUND YOU ON THE GROUND IN THE PARK.
HUH...? HOS-PI-TAL?

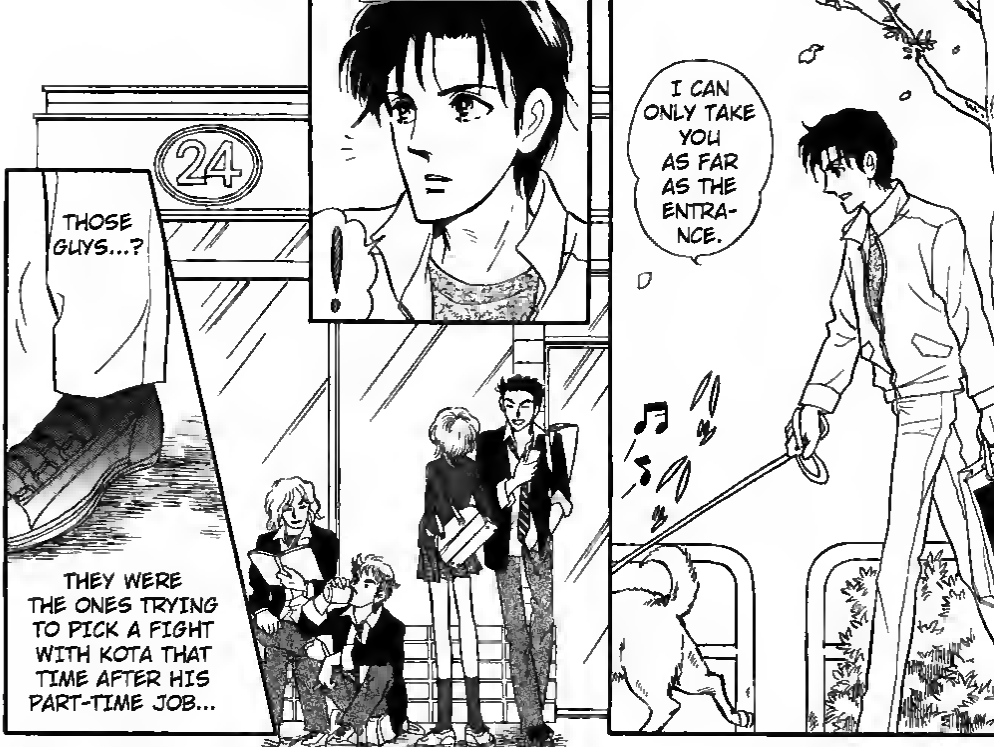

WHERE IS MIYA?
WHY DID HE...?
A BOY'S MOM FROM THE NURSERY TOOK HER IN FOR US TONIGHT.
...
...!

HE WAS HIT BY A BASEBALL BAT OR SOMETHING ALIKE. ONE OF THE BONES IN HIS RIGHT ARM CRACKED WHEN HE TRIED TO GUARD HIS HEAD.
A SECOND HIT MISSED HIS HEAD AND JUST GRAZED HIS FORE-HEAD.
IT SEEMS LIKE THE BRAIN CONCUSSION WAS CAUSED BY HITTING THE GROUND.
WELL... SINCE HE'S YOUNG, HIS ARM SHOULD RECOVER QUICKLY.
TO BE SURE, IT WOULD BE BEST IF HE STAYED HERE FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS, FOR A THOROUGH EXAMINATION.
...
KOTA...?
WE CONTACTED YOUR HOME ROOM TEACHER.
WHO CALLED YOU THAT TIME?
THE ONE WHO DID THIS MUST HAVE BEEN SOMEONE YOU KNOW!

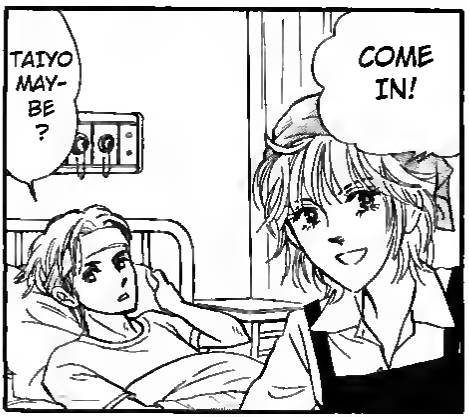
SO, YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE PERSON WHO DID THIS, NOR THE REASON FOR IT...?
...I CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER VERY WELL....
WE FOUND OUT THAT AT YOUR PART-TIME JOB AND AT SCHOOL, YOU SEEM TO HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION... IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU WERE IN ANY KIND OF TROUBLE.
DIDN'T SOMEONE CALL YOU OUT TO THE PARK BEFORE THE INCIDENT...?
OR DON'T YOU REMEMBER...?
I'M SORRY ...

FROM THE SHOCK, HE MIGHT BE SUFFERING FROM SOME TEMPORARY MEMORY LOSS,
WE WILL CONTINUE OUR INVESTI-GATION,
BUT PLEASE LET US KNOW IF HE REMEM-BERS ANYTHING.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ARE YOU TAKING A DAY OFF BECAUSE OF ME?
I STILL HAD SOME VACATION DAYS LEFT, SO IT'S ALL RIGHT!
...BUT WITH YOU OUT OF THE HOUSE, BOTH MIYA AND WONDER ARE VERY LONELY, YOU KNOW.
...I'M SORRY.
WHAT ARE YOU APOLOGIZING FOR, STUPID? YOU'RE THE VICTIM!
WELL ...

DON'T WORRY, SHE'S NOT A BOTHER HERE AT ALL!
I'LL GO RELIEVE KAORI AT THE HOSPITAL, AND TELL HER TO COME PICK MIYA UP.
MIYA, STAY HERE WITH SHIN AND BE A GOOD GIRL UNTIL MOMMY GETS HERE.
MIYA!
KOTA ...
MIGHT IT BE YOU'RE COVERING FOR SOMEONE...?
COULD IT BE THE SAME PERSON WHO KILLED THOSE PIGEONS AND HURT A GIRL AT THE PARK?
I'M JUST HAPPY KOTA WASN'T TOO BADLY INJURED...
うきゃ
I'M SO SCARED TO EVEN GO NEAR THAT PARK ANYMORE.
BYE BYE
わんっ


24
THOSE GUYS...?
!
THEY WERE THE ONES TRYING TO PICK A FIGHT WITH KOTA THAT TIME AFTER HIS PART-TIME JOB...
I CAN ONLY TAKE YOU AS FAR AS THE ENTRANCE.

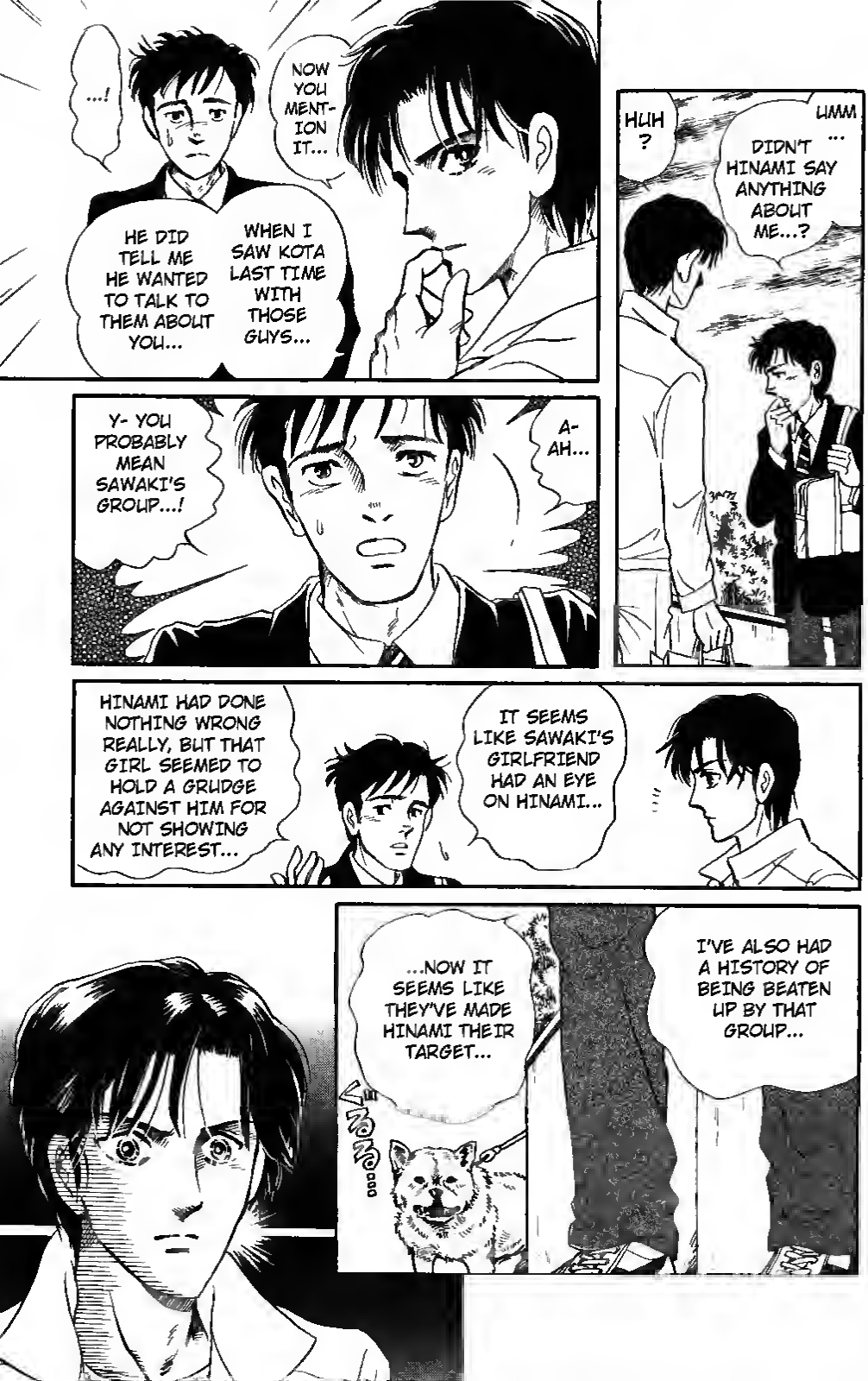
HEY, WONDER !!
I'M TELLING YOU, YOU CAN'T MEET HIM EVEN IF YOU HURRY!


TAIYO MAYBE ?
COME IN!

コンコン!

I WAS SO WORRIED WHEN I HEARD YOU GOT HIT ON THE HEAD!!
WILL YOUR ARM BE FINE BY THE NEXT MATCH?
YOU LOOK BETTER THAN WE THOUGHT YOU WOULD LOOK!!
HINAMI!! ARE YOU OKAY!?
I'M GLAD WE WON'T BE NEEDING IT!
...DON'T GO MAKING MEMORIAL PORTRAITS OF ME, PLEASE...
JUST FOR THE WORST CASE... WE ENLARGED ONE OF YOUR PICTURES...
YEAH, WELL ...
...SO YOU DID TAKE YOUR SCHOOL LIFE SERIOUSLY, IT SEEMS...
WE SAW IT AS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY, SO WE CAME HERE WHILE JOGGING.
YOU GUYS STINK OF SWEAT!
WHY DID THE WHOLE BASKETBALL TEAM COME ALL THE WAY HERE?

HUH?
やあ。
!
WAIT HERE UNTIL KAORI COMES TO PICK YOU UP!
病院
U-UMM...
AIKAWA... WAS IT? DID YOU COME TO VISIT KOTA?
EH...
DON'T YOU KNOW ANY-THING?
WELL, HE'S NOT THAT BADLY INJURED.
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY CLUE WHO MIGHT HAVE DONE SOMETHING LIKE THIS TO KOTA?
ガル...
N-NO...
?
H-HOW IS HE...?


...!
NOW YOU MENTION IT...
WHEN I SAW KOTA LAST TIME WITH THOSE GUYS...
HE DID TELL ME HE WANTED TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT YOU...
HUH?
UMM...
DIDN'T HINAMI SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME...?
Y- YOU PROBABLY MEAN SAWAKI'S GROUP...!
A-AH...
HINAMI HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG REALLY, BUT THAT GIRL SEEMED TO HOLD A GRUDGE AGAINST HIM FOR NOT SHOWING ANY INTEREST...
IT SEEMS LIKE SAWAKI'S GIRLFRIEND HAD AN EYE ON HINAMI...
...NOW IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'VE MADE HINAMI THEIR TARGET...
I'VE ALSO HAD A HISTORY OF BEING BEATEN UP BY THAT GROUP...
GRRR...

BUT HE LEFT, SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT CRAM SCHOOL...
I THOUGHT HE WAS HERE FOR A VISIT...
AI-KAWA ?
KOTA HINAMI
...
!
SHE'S ONE OF MY CLASS-MATES. WHY IS SHE HERE?
IT WAS HER...!
YOU MUST BE ONE OF KOTA'S FRIENDS !?
HEY!

I JUST WANTED TO...
N-NO! YOU'RE WRONG!
A LOT OF FRIENDS VISITED HIM EARLIER ALREADY!
NO NEED TO BE ASHAMED, COME ON IN!
YOU MUST HAVE COME TO VISIT KOTA!
...YOU JUST WANTED TO APOLO-GIZE?
DIDN'T YOU JUST COME HERE TO CHECK OUT...
...IF KOTA HAS TOLD ANYONE THE TRUTH YET?
OR WHO ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN TO CALL HIM OUT TO THE PARK LIKE THAT?
HUH ...!?
TAI YO?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
WHAT !?

WAIT ...!
...BUT WE ENDED UP NOT DOING IT!
WE DID PLAN TO CALL HIM OUT...
HEY, TAIYO!!
DON'T GO JUDGING PEOPLE WITHOUT ANY PROOF, YOU IDIOT!
YOU AND YOUR GANG WERE TRYING TO DO SOMETHING TO KOTA!
I ALREADY KNOW!
YOU'RE WRONG !!
TAIYO !?
UMM...
EH!?
MY NAME IS SHIMAOKA. THANK YOU FOR CONTACTING ME.
IS THIS KOTA'S ROOM?

KOTA'S REAL DAD!?
I CONTACTED HIM ABOUT IT...
THE LADY FROM THE BAR WHERE KOTA WORKS GAVE ME HIS PHONE NUMBER...
HEY...
AH...
I HEARD SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU...
BUT AT THAT TIME, I THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT KOTA MIGHT BE INJURED FOR LIFE...
MAYBE IT WAS A BIT OF AN OVER-REACTION ...
...A CHANCE THAT KOTA MIGHT BE INJURED FOR LIFE...
TAIYO ...?
SAWAKI AND HIS GROUP...
UN-FORGIV-ABLE!!
...KOTA COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!!

ワンワン！
ワフ！
IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME, WONDER!
KO-
I KNOW, I KNOW, NOW STOP THAT ALREADY!
ﾌﾜﾌﾜﾌﾜﾌﾜ
MIYA IS ALSO WELCOMING YOU BACK HOME!
IT'S A NICE PICTURE, AND YOUR CLASSMATES WENT THROUGH THE TROUBLE OF MAKING THIS FOR YOU SO I...
DON'T DECORATE OUR HOUSE WITH THIS !!!

おんっ
!
WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR!?
TAI-YO!
IKUMI TOLD ME YOU SUSPECT THAT WE DID ALL THIS, SO WE'VE COME TO CLEAR SOME THINGS UP.
HOW DARE YOU COME HERE SELLING BULLSHIT LIKE THAT!!?
DO YOU REALLY THINK WE'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU SAY!!?

JUST THINK ABOUT IT! THIS GROUP OF SCUM ALMOST GOT ONE OF OUR FAMILY MEMBERS KILLED!
HUH?
WHO'S BULL-SHITTING WHO HERE!?
PLEASE, TAIYO, THERE'S NO PROOF THAT THEY DID IT!
I'M SURE THEY'RE THE ONES WHO DID IT!
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD WHAT I HEARD!
!
I'M SO SORRY... THIS OLD MAN HERE GETS HEATED UP SO EASILY...
HM?
HUH ...?
DO YOU SEE WONDER GROWLING OR BARKING AT THEM!?
THESE KIDS DIDN'T DO IT!!
?

WHAT!!?
ARGH!
HUH!!? YOU'RE THE GUY WHO TRIED TO PICK ME UP IN FRONT OF THE STATION!!
EH?
MA-
THEY AREN'T THE ONES WHO DID THIS.
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU DON'T REMEMBER WHO ATTACKED YOU...?
YEAH, BUT I'M SURE IT WASN'T THEM.
I- I KNEW YOU WERE OLDER THAN ME, BUT THAT YOU HAD A CHILD ...!?
IS THIS FOR REAL!?
HEY SAWAKI, CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS TO ME!!?

TAI-YO ...
I'M SO SORRY !!
I WAS TOO FAST TO JUDGE!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL GO GET SOME SUSHI TO CELEBRATE KOTA'S RETURN HOME, SO PLEASE COME IN!
♪HOR-SEY!♪
HEY ...
HUH !?
SHOULDN'T WE BE THE ONE'S APOLOGIZING ...?
WELL ...
...
FROM THE ONE EXTREME TO THE OTHER.
HUH ?

...
SO... IT WAS AIKAWA WHO DID THIS...
NOW I THINK OF IT... HE USED TO BE IN THE BASEBALL CLUB IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.
WASN'T IT THAT HIS PARENTS MADE HIM QUIT, OR SOMETHING?
NO WAY! HE ISN'T THE TYPE TO CONTINUE SOMETHING FOR A LONG TIME.
DO YOU KNOW WHERE AIKAWA LIVES?
HUH?
DO YOU PLAN ON TAKING REVENGE?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT,
HEY, HINAMI, WHO'S THIS WOMAN?
HUH ?
OH, THAT'S MY MOM.
HUH? THAT'S SO WEIRD TO DECORATE YOUR HOME WITH A PICTURE OF YOUR MOM.

KAORI PUT IT THERE WITHOUT EVEN ASKING ME.
WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR PARENTS ANYWAY?
...
MY MOM DIED, AND MY FATHER WASN'T THERE FROM THE VERY START.
OH... BUT... AREN'T YOU LUCKY IN A WAY?
YEAH! THAT OLD MAN NAMED TAIYO YOU HAVE HERE SEEMS TO BE A REASONABLE GUY!
はは...
APOLOGIZING TO US LIKE THAT WITH HIS HEAD AGAINST THE GROUND...
AS IF YOU CAN TALK!! TRYING TO SECRETLY STEAL HINAMI'S PICTURES LIKE THAT!
SHUT UP, I'M NOT GONNA STEAL HIS PICTURES.
カシャ
A MARITAL QUARREL AT A TIME LIKE THIS...?
KOTA, USED TO THIS FROM WATCHING TAIYO AND KAORI.
DON'T SAY THAT WHEN YOUR GIRL-FRIEND IS IN THE SAME ROOM!!
...AND KAORI REALLY IS MY TYPE...
SO, IF YOU PLAN ON GETTING AIKAWA BACK, YOU CAN COUNT ON US.
...ANYWAY! BECAUSE OF HIM, EVERYONE THOUGHT WE DID IT.
SO IT'S NOT LIKE WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ALL THIS.

OKAY ...
IF IT'S OKAY, I'D LIKE TO SETTLE THIS BY MYSELF.
IF YOU WANT TO GET HIM ONE ON ONE, WE WON'T DO ANYTHING.
BE CAREFUL. AIKAWA HAS BEEN A WEAK LOSER FOR AGES, BUT HE HAS SOME DIRTY TRICKS!
...
THE LIGHT AT THE ENTRANCE ISN'T ON.
THERE ARE NO LIGHTS ON AT ALL. MAYBE NOBODY'S HOME?
KAORI !?
おんっ
I WAS JUST TAKING WONDER OUT FOR A WALK. WHAT A COINCIDENCE.

OH...!
ガサッ
ワン
ワーン
WHAH !!
I- IT WASN'T...
...
わほっ
STOP !
WONDER!
STOP !

I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU THAT BADLY!
I JUST FELT SO ENVIOUS OF YOU...
ENVI-OUS?
YOU KNOW... YOU'RE SO GOOD AT EVERYTHING YOU DO WITHOUT EVEN DOING YOUR BEST... AND EVERYONE AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME LOVES YOU FOR IT...
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT, EVEN IF I TRY MY UTTER BEST, AND PEOPLE ALWAYS MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME. WE'RE SO VERY DIFFERENT!
...SO, THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD EVER UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH!
...AND LIKE IT'S NOTHING, YOU CALL IT HORRIBLE WHAT SAWAKI HAD BEEN DOING TO ME!
THAT'S JUST HORRIBLE !!
...!

AI-KA-WA ...
DO YOU THINK I CAN JUST ACCEPT AN APOLOGY LIKE THAT SO EASILY? IT PISSES ME OFF!
YOU'VE NEVER HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING HATED, OR BEING THOUGHT OF AS A BURDEN, HAVE YOU!?
...MAYBE THERE WAS A MISUNDER-STANDING. IN THAT CASE, YOU HAVE MY APOLOGY!
...I JUST MEANT TO SAY THAT I FOUND IT HORRIBLE HOW SAWAKI AND THE OTHERS JUST BULLIED YOU LIKE THAT.
I MUST HAVE SAID IT IN TOO FEW WORDS...
THAT'S WHY I MADE YOU GO THROUGH THAT EXPERIENCE!
IF YOU JUST KEEP ON ACTING SO FULL OF YOURSELF, ONE DAY YOU'LL JUST RUN YOUR NOSE INTO A WALL!
AI-KAWA ...?
THAT KOTA HAS ALWAYS LIVED A HAPPY LIFE, AND HAS NEVER GONE THROUGH TOUGH TIMES,
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?

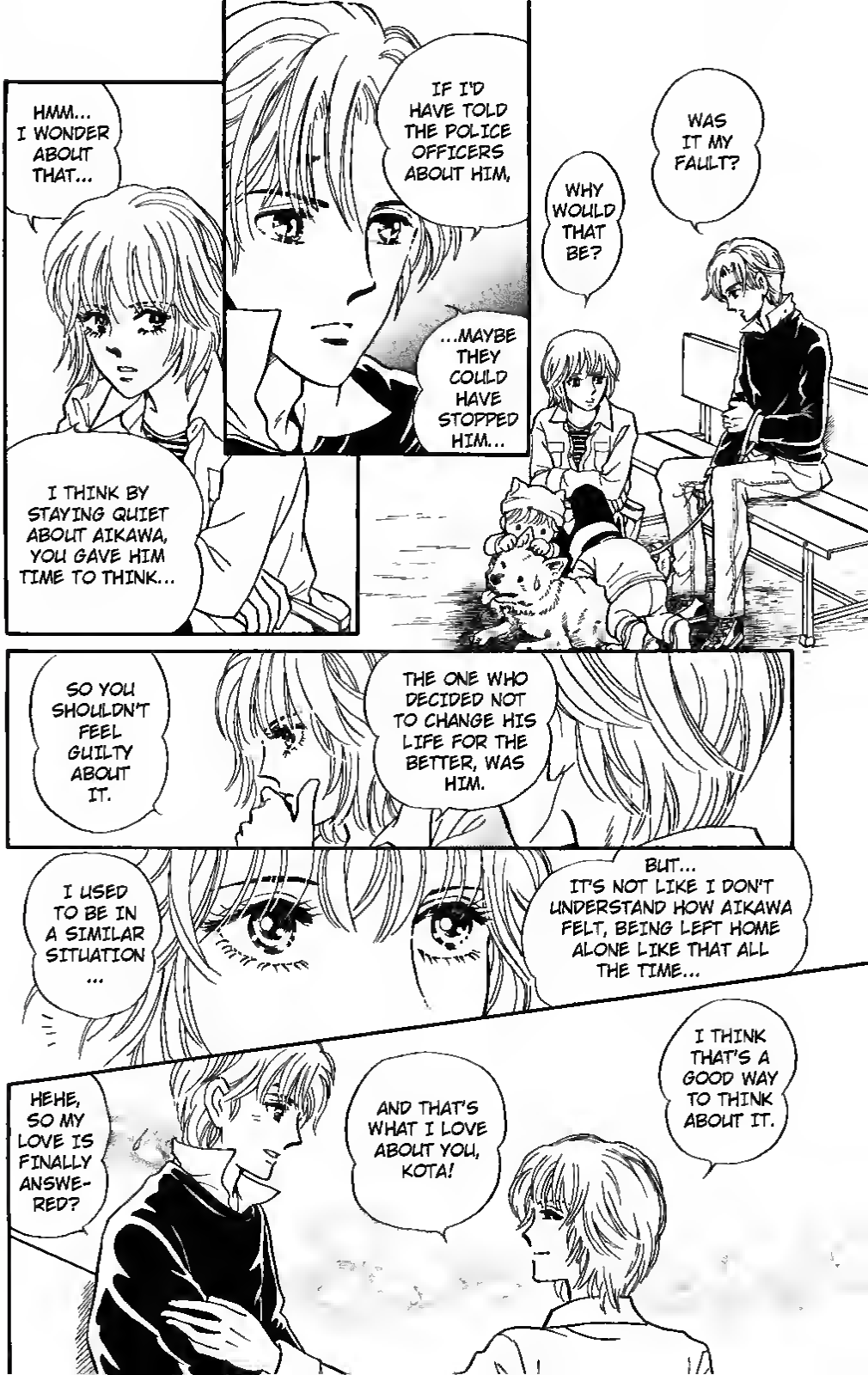
...DID YOU NEVER WONDER WHY KOTA IS LIVING WITH HIS AUNT AND UNCLE...
?
DIDN'T YOU FIND IT WEIRD WHEN YOU CAME TO OUR HOME?
KOTA'S MOM, WHO HE HAD BEEN LIVING TOGETHER WITH AS A CHILD, WAS PUSHED FROM A STAIRCASE, AND DIED.
KAORI ...
THE PERSON WHO FOUND HER BODY, WAS THE NINE YEAR OLD KOTA.
AT THAT TIME, THE ONLY ONE HE COULD TALK TO WAS WONDER, REALLY.
BUT AT FIRST, I REALLY COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO BE NICE TO HIM.
THEN HE CAME TO OUR HOUSE,
BUT TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN TAIYO GOT STABBED, AND HIS LIFE WAS IN DANGER...
KOTA AT THAT TIME... HE TOLD ME THAT IF TAIYO DIDN'T MAKE IT, HE WOULD BE THE ONE TO PROTECT ME AND THE CHILD IN MY WOMB...

"I'LL PROTECT YOU...!" HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE THAT TOWARDS YOUR OWN PARENTS!?
HE WAS JUST A 15 YEAR OLD KID, IN THIRD GRADE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL!
...
THE REASON WHY KOTA ACTED THERE IN A VERY ADULT WAY, FOR HIS AGE,
WAS BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN IN SITUATIONS WHERE HE JUST COULDN'T AFFORD TO ACT LIKE A CHILD!
THE FACT THAT HE'S SO FRANK TOWARDS PEOPLE IS BECAUSE HE HAS TROUBLE SHOWING HIS TRUE FEELINGS!
IF YOU LOOK AT HIM IN THE WARPED WAY THAT YOU DO, HE MAY BE A PERSON TO BE ENVIOUS OF.
IF A FAMILY MEMBER, WHO HAS DONE HIS VERY BEST TO MAKE THE BEST OUT OF LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF THE FAMILY, WAS TAKEN AWAY BECAUSE OF SUCH INSANE REASONING,
NOT JUST TAIYO, BUT ME TOO, WOULD WANT TO SEE YOU MEET THE SAME FATE!!

AI-KAWA ...
THAT'S ENOUGH, KAORI...
...
SO THE REST IS UP TO YOU.
AND I ASKED SAWAKI NOT TO BRING YOU ANY HARM.
I DIDN'T TELL ANY-THING TO THE POLICE.
DO YOU HAVE ANY BUSINESS HERE...?
?
LET'S GO, WONDER.
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
WELL, WE WERE JUST GOING HOME.
S-SHUT UP...

HUH?
DID YOU SAY ANYTHING?
I WOULD WANT TO SEE YOU MEET THE SAME FATE!
FOR THE SAKE OF THE FAMILY!
...SHUT UP...
YOU REALLY CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT, CAN YOU?
YOU'RE SO MUCH LIKE YOUR FATHER IN THAT WAY!
OH! ONE OF KOTA'S CLASS-MATES!?
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENED, BUT DON'T CAUSE ME ANY TROUBLE
WHAT A WASTE OF THE GOOD TIME I HAD BEFORE I CAME HOME
AH, IT'S SO DEPRESSING, JUST THE THOUGHT OF HAVING YOU IN THIS HOUSE...
YOU DIRTY PIG!!
I'M TELLING YOU THIS HAS BEEN ALL YOUR FAULT!!

HE WAS THE ONE WHO CALLED THE AMBU-LANCE,
...WHEN THEY PICKED HER UP, HE WAS CRYING OUT "PLEASE DON'T DIE" ...
SHE EVIDENTLY SURVIVED IT.... BUT THE MOTHER ISN'T WITHOUT FAULT HERSELF.
きゃー!
HER HUSBAND HAD TO MOVE FOR HIS JOB, AND WAS FOOLING AROUND WITH DIFFERENT WOMEN, IT SEEMED.
SO SHE ALSO STARTED PLAYING AROUND WITH SOME GUY.
IT'S NOT A MIRACLE THAT THEIR SON TURNED OUT DAMAGED.
DON'T TEASE DOGGY!
THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT OKAY FOR HIM TO KILL BIRDS AND HIT CHILDREN!
YOU'RE RIGHT... I'M SO GLAD KOTA WAS OKAY!
IN ANY CASE, THAT WAS A REALLY AWFUL THING TO DO!
YEAH, I AGREE!


HMM... I WONDER ABOUT THAT...
I THINK BY STAYING QUIET ABOUT AIKAWA, YOU GAVE HIM TIME TO THINK...
IF I'D HAVE TOLD THE POLICE OFFICERS ABOUT HIM,
...MAYBE THEY COULD HAVE STOPPED HIM...
WHY WOULD THAT BE?
WAS IT MY FAULT?
SO YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL GUILTY ABOUT IT.
THE ONE WHO DECIDED NOT TO CHANGE HIS LIFE FOR THE BETTER, WAS HIM.
I USED TO BE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION ...
BUT... IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW AIKAWA FELT, BEING LEFT HOME ALONE LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME...
HEHE, SO MY LOVE IS FINALLY ANSWERED?
AND THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU, KOTA!
I THINK THAT'S A GOOD WAY TO THINK ABOUT IT.

LUNCH IS READY, SO I JUST CAME TO CALL YOU.
WHY ARE EVEN THOSE GUYS HERE?
OH, IT'S TAIYO!
THE CHILDREN HAVE A LOT OF FUN PLAYING WITH THEM!
...GOT NOTHING ELSE TO DO...
...DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO GO STEALING OTHER PEOPLE'S WIVES BEHIND THEIR BACKS?
おんっ
OH, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE
PA-♡
OH HEY, TAIYO!
SO UNCOOL! YOU DRESS LIKE SUCH AN OLD GUY!
WHY THE BAD-MOUTHING ALL OF A SUDDEN?
THAT'S JUST MY WAY OF TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO BOWED DOWN TO ME.
WHAT!? DON'T EVER MENTION THAT AGAIN!!
WHAHAHAHA!
END OF CHAPTER 4

WONDER!

A FUTURE LEFT BEHIND

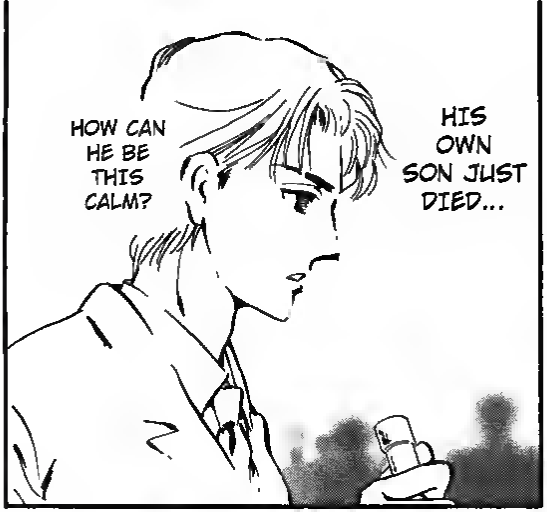
遺された未来

THAT NIGHT ...
IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR MINORU TO HAVE A PEACEFUL TIME WITH THE FAMILY, EVEN AFTER DINNER.
WELL THEN, I'M GOING TO SLEEP.
IT HAD BEEN A VERY LONG TIME,
THAT I HAD SEEN A SMILE LIKE THAT ON MINORU'S FACE...

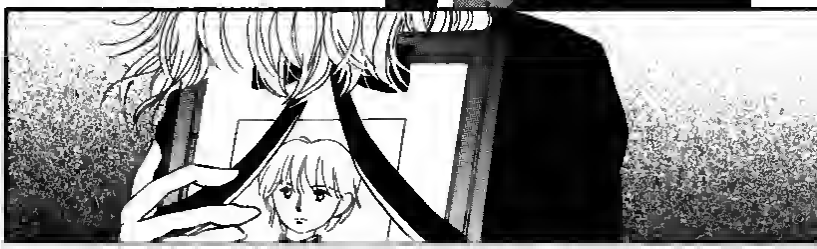
MOM...
...NAO ?
BROTHER ISN'T IN HIS BED...
AT A TIME LIKE THIS!?
THE FRONT DOOR IS UNLOCK-ED.
MAYBE HE JUST WENT TO BUY SOMETHING AT THE CONVENI-ENCE STORE.
...
WE REALLY HAVE TO SCOLD HIM ABOUT THIS, WHEN HE GETS BACK.

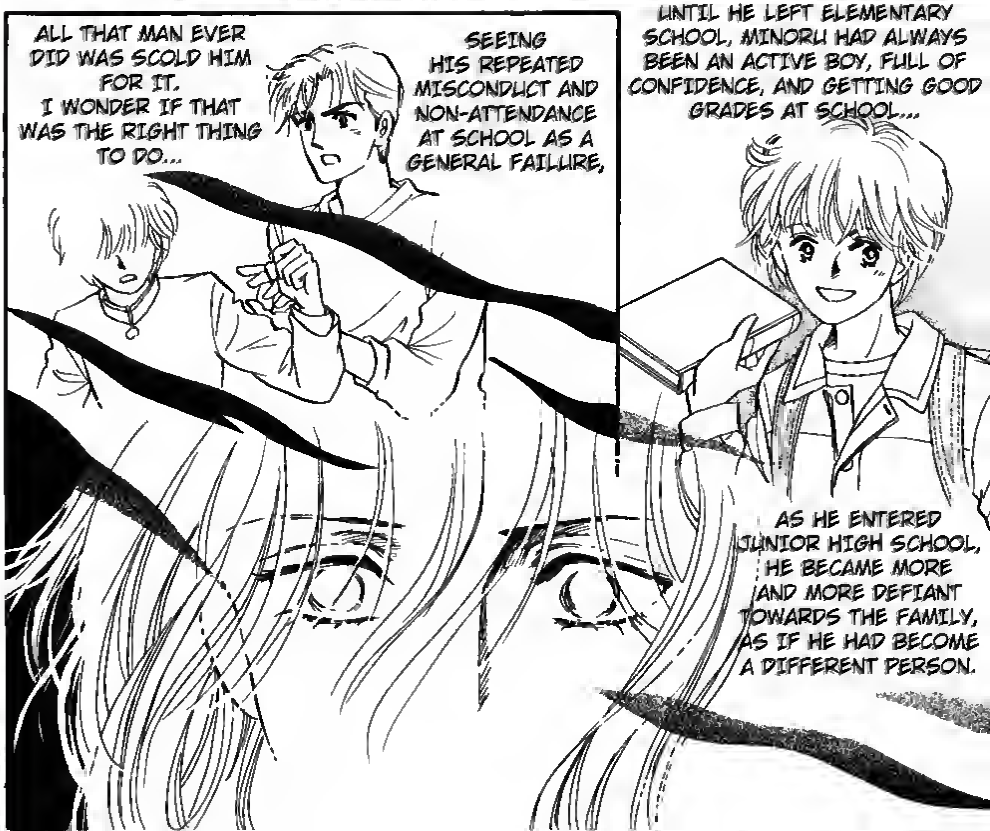
THE NEXT MORNING,
INSIDE A GREENHOUSE ON A NEARBY FIELD,
MINORU'S BODY WAS FOUND. HE HAD PUT AN END TO HIS OWN THIRTEEN YEARS LONG LIFE.

WHY
...?



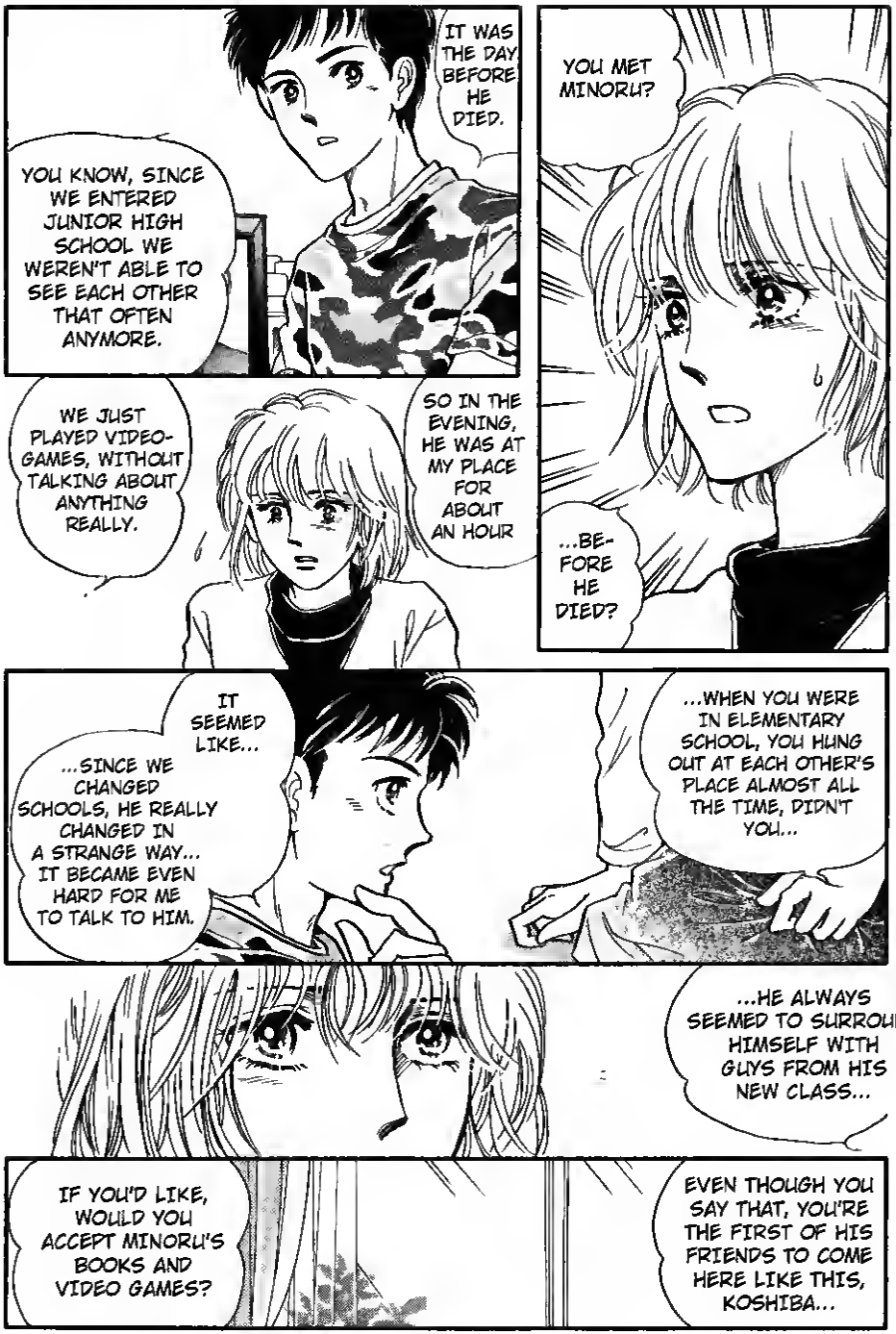
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT...

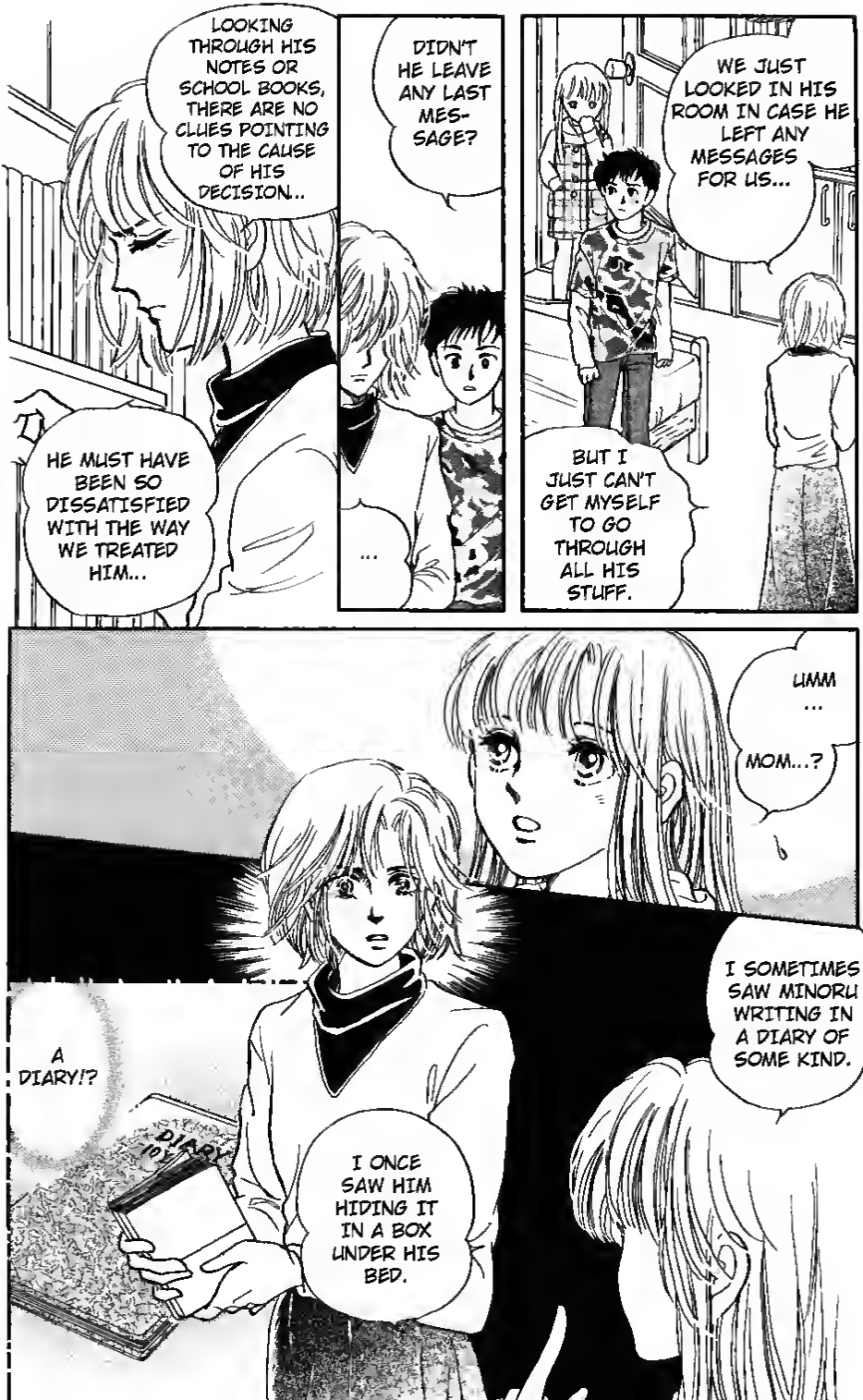



ALL THAT MAN EVER DID WAS SCOLD HIM FOR IT.
I WONDER IF THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO...
SEEING HIS REPEATED MISCONDUCT AND NON-ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL AS A GENERAL FAILURE,
UNTIL HE LEFT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MINORU HAD ALWAYS BEEN AN ACTIVE BOY, FULL OF CONFIDENCE, AND GETTING GOOD GRADES AT SCHOOL...
AS HE ENTERED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, HE BECAME MORE AND MORE DEFIANT TOWARDS THE FAMILY, AS IF HE HAD BECOME A DIFFERENT PERSON.

WHAT COULD HAVE BROUGHT HIM SO MUCH WORRY AND DESPAIR,
WHAT COULD IT HAVE BEEN, THAT MADE A THIRTEEN YEAR OLD BOY,
...THAT TOOK HIM TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE COULDN'T KEEP ON LIVING THIS LIFE.
MINORU...
I WASN'T ANY HELP TO YOU...
I JUST COULDN'T KEEP UP WITH THE WAY YOU WERE CHANGING...
I WASN'T ABLE TO DO ANYTHING FOR YOU...!!
AT LEAST TRY TO EAT SOMETHING, AND TAKE A REST...
MOM...
EVEN THOUGH... MINORU WAS HURTING SO BADLY...!
I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR HIM!!
YOUR BODY WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THIS.

IN CONSIDERATION WITH HIS SCHOOL, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT MINORU HAD SUFFERED A SUDDEN DEATH.
BUT THE FACT THAT HE HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE SOON GOT OUT.
...
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, HE TOLD THE PUBLIC THAT THERE WERE NO BULLIES IN HIS SCHOOL.
AND THAT MOST LIKELY TROUBLES IN THE FAMILY MUST HAVE DRIVEN HIM TO SUICIDE.
TROUBLES IN THE FAMILY ...?
SO IT WAS ALL OUR FAULT...?
MINORU ...
WAS IT MY FAULT?
MOM?
KOSHIBA IS AT THE DOOR.
ONE OF MINORU'S FRIENDS FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ...


IT WAS THE DAY BEFORE HE DIED.
YOU KNOW, SINCE WE ENTERED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WE WEREN'T ABLE TO SEE EACH OTHER THAT OFTEN ANYMORE.
YOU MET MINORU?
WE JUST PLAYED VIDEO-GAMES, WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT ANYTHING REALLY.
SO IN THE EVENING, HE WAS AT MY PLACE FOR ABOUT AN HOUR
...BE-FORE HE DIED?
IT SEEMED LIKE...
...SINCE WE CHANGED SCHOOLS, HE REALLY CHANGED IN A STRANGE WAY... IT BECAME EVEN HARD FOR ME TO TALK TO HIM.
...WHEN YOU WERE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, YOU HUNG OUT AT EACH OTHER'S PLACE ALMOST ALL THE TIME, DIDN'T YOU...
...HE ALWAYS SEEMED TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH GUYS FROM HIS NEW CLASS...
IF YOU'D LIKE, WOULD YOU ACCEPT MINORU'S BOOKS AND VIDEO GAMES?
EVEN THOUGH YOU SAY THAT, YOU'RE THE FIRST OF HIS FRIENDS TO COME HERE LIKE THIS, KOSHIBA...


LOOKING THROUGH HIS NOTES OR SCHOOL BOOKS, THERE ARE NO CLUES POINTING TO THE CAUSE OF HIS DECISION..
HE MUST HAVE BEEN SO DISSATISFIED WITH THE WAY WE TREATED HIM...
DIDN'T HE LEAVE ANY LAST MES-SAGE?
...
WE JUST LOOKED IN HIS ROOM IN CASE HE LEFT ANY MESSAGES FOR US...
BUT I JUST CAN'T GET MYSELF TO GO THROUGH ALL HIS STUFF.
UMM ...
MOM...?
I SOMETIMES SAW MINORU WRITING IN A DIARY OF SOME KIND.
A DIARY!?
DIARY
I ONCE SAW HIM HIDING IT IN A BOX UNDER HIS BED.

I'LL WRITE ABOUT HOW STUPID YOU AND DAD ARE FOR GIVING ME THIS!
THERE'S NO WAY HE WILL EVER WRITE IN IT.
THAT'S SO UNCOOL...
LOOK, YOU CAN TRACK TEN YEARS IN THIS DIARY!
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IN TEN YEARS YOU'LL HAVE GRADUATED FROM UNIVERSITY!
IT'S A PRESENT DAD GAVE HIM FOR NEW YEAR, WHEN HE WAS IN SIXTH GRADE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
EVEN THIS YEAR HE WROTE IN IT...
I don't wanna go to school...
IT SEEMS LIKE HE STARTED WRITING IN IT FROM THE DAY WE GAVE IT TO HIM...
3月25日
2000
土
2001
日
2002
月
DIARY

1月31日
2000
月
2001
水
Because
of them
Living has b
unbearable!
no other way
or me than t
die
Farewell.
...
DIARY
HUH!?
I THOUGHT THEY SAID THERE WEREN'T ANY BULLIES INVOLVED!?

KOSHIBA TOLD US MINORU WAS ONE OF HIS FOLLOWERS.
ONE OF THEM SEEMS TO BE THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE.
HE DOES MENTION THE NAMES OF A FEW CLASSMATES HERE...
HARUKA,
IS HE THE ONE WHO CAUSED MINORU TO...
IS HE...
I WILL GO WITH YOU!
I'LL HAVE TO GO TO THE SCHOOL, AND LOOK INTO IT A LITTLE BIT.
WE SHOULDN'T BE MAKING ANY CONCLUSIONS YET...
...
IF YOU'RE THAT EMOTIONAL ABOUT IT, IT WON'T GET US ANYWHERE.
AFTER THE DATE OF ENTERING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, THAT COMPLETELY CHANGED.
DIARY 10 YEARS
MINORU'S DIARY... UP TO THE DATE OF HIS GRADUATION FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, WERE PARAGRAPHS THAT DESCRIBED A HAPPY AND FULFILLING LIFE.

THE TROUBLE STARTED WHEN MINORU LOST, AND KANO WAS CHOSEN AS THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE.
WHEN MINORU ENTERED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, HE SEEMED TO BE INVOLVED IN A FIGHT OVER THE LEADERSHIP WITH A BOY NAMED KANO, WHO CAME FROM A DIFFERENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
TOGETHER WITH LOSING HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE CLASS,
HE STARTED GETTING TREATED BADLY BY THE GROUP THAT REVOLVED AROUND THIS KANO KID.
THIS GROUP HARASSED HIM PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY, LIKE IT WAS SOME KIND OF GAME.
AS HIS PRIDE REACHED A LOWER AND LOWER POINT, HIS CLEAN PARAGRAPHS BECAME DIRTY SCRIBBLES.
DIARY. TODAY'S TEST F/ KANO TOOK MY PAPER, SO I HAD TO HAND IN A BLANCO.
TODAY THEY POURED WATER OVER ME, WHILE EVERYONE WAS LAUGHING
THEY MADE HIM START SMOKING AND SHOPLIFTING.
HIS CONSCIENCE PRICKED HIM... AND THEN HE ALSO LOST OUR TRUST...
WE GOT A NOTICE FROM SCHOOL ABOUT MINORU'S BEHAVIOUR.
AT THAT TIME...
BECAUSE WE DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER...

JUST LIKE THAT, HIS ONLY SAFE HIDING PLACE, HIS FAMILY, BECAME HOSTILE TERRITORY.
KIDS LIKE HIM WHO CAN'T DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD...
THEY'RE THE WORST!
HOW HORRIBLE DID WE MAKE HIM FEEL...?
KO-SHIBA !?
THIS GUY, HE WANTS TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU.

IT WASN'T ME... REALLY...!
I WAS JUST TOLD TO...
NO... UMM... WELL...
APO-LO-GIZE ...?
I- I WAS JUST BEING ORDERED AROUND BY KANO! I HAD NO CHOICE!!
WHEN I TOLD HIM HIS NAME WAS MENTIONED IN MINORU'S DIARY, HE STARTED FREAKING OUT.
HE'S ONE OF MINORU'S BULLIES!
HE SAID HE DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.
...HE SAID HE WAS GLAD THAT THAT ANNOYING KID WAS FINALLY GONE.
KANO WAS THERE...
I NOTICED THAT AT THE FUNERAL, MINORU'S HOME TEACHER HAD BROUGHT THE WHOLE CLASS GROUP...
WERE YOU AND THE OTHERS... THERE TOO, THAT TIME?

THE SCHOOL WON'T ADMIT THAT EASILY THAT THE CAUSE OF HIS SUICIDE WAS WITHIN THE SCHOOL.
THEY SAID THEY WOULD LOOK INTO IT, BUT I DON'T EXPECT THEM TO DO ANYTHING REALLY...
ガラ
THEY WON'T LISTEN TO US.
BUT THERE WAS BULLY-ING GOING ON!!
NOT TALKING ABOUT IT TO US OR TO ANYONE, HE WAS MISUNDER-STOOD, WHICH LEAD HIM TO...
IF THE SCHOOL DOESN'T ADMIT IT, I WILL SEE TO IT THAT THEY DO!
MINORU WAS KILLED!!

IS THERE ANY-THING ...
YES, HE IS...
IS YOUR SON AT HOME, MRS. KANO?
OH, YOU'RE NISHI-SAWA'S MOM...?
HEY!
I'M GOING TO CRAM SCHOOL, SO GIVE ME SOME MONEY.
!
HUH?
THE TEACHER ALSO ASKED ME ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS... IT'S REALLY A BOTHER TO ME, YOU SEE!
JUST SO YOU KNOW, I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH NISHISAWA'S DEATH!
WHAT KIND OF BUSI-NESS DO YOU HAVE WITH MY CHILD?

DON'T JUST GO AROUND BLAMING PEOPLE FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S DEATHS!
I EVEN WENT TO HIS FUNERAL!
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND OR ANYTHING!
IN MINORU'S DIARY, HE WROTE THAT YOU WERE THE CAUSE FOR EVERYTHING!
HEY HEY! WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?
SPEAK THE TRUTH!!
MINORU WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED YOU TO COME!!
IF YOU SAY ANY MORE THAN THAT,
I WILL CALL THE POLICE!
IT WAS ALL YOUR FAULT!
YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS KILLED HIM!!
TAKE IT EASY THERE, LADY!

SOMETIMES CAME TO BURN INCENSE.
MINO-RU'S TEACHER
DID YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MINORU AT SCHOOL ...?
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS SCHOOL POLICY OR SOMETHING ELSE,
BUT HE NEVER SPOKE A SINGLE WORD TO ME.
THE SCHOOL NEVER GOT BACK TO US EITHER.

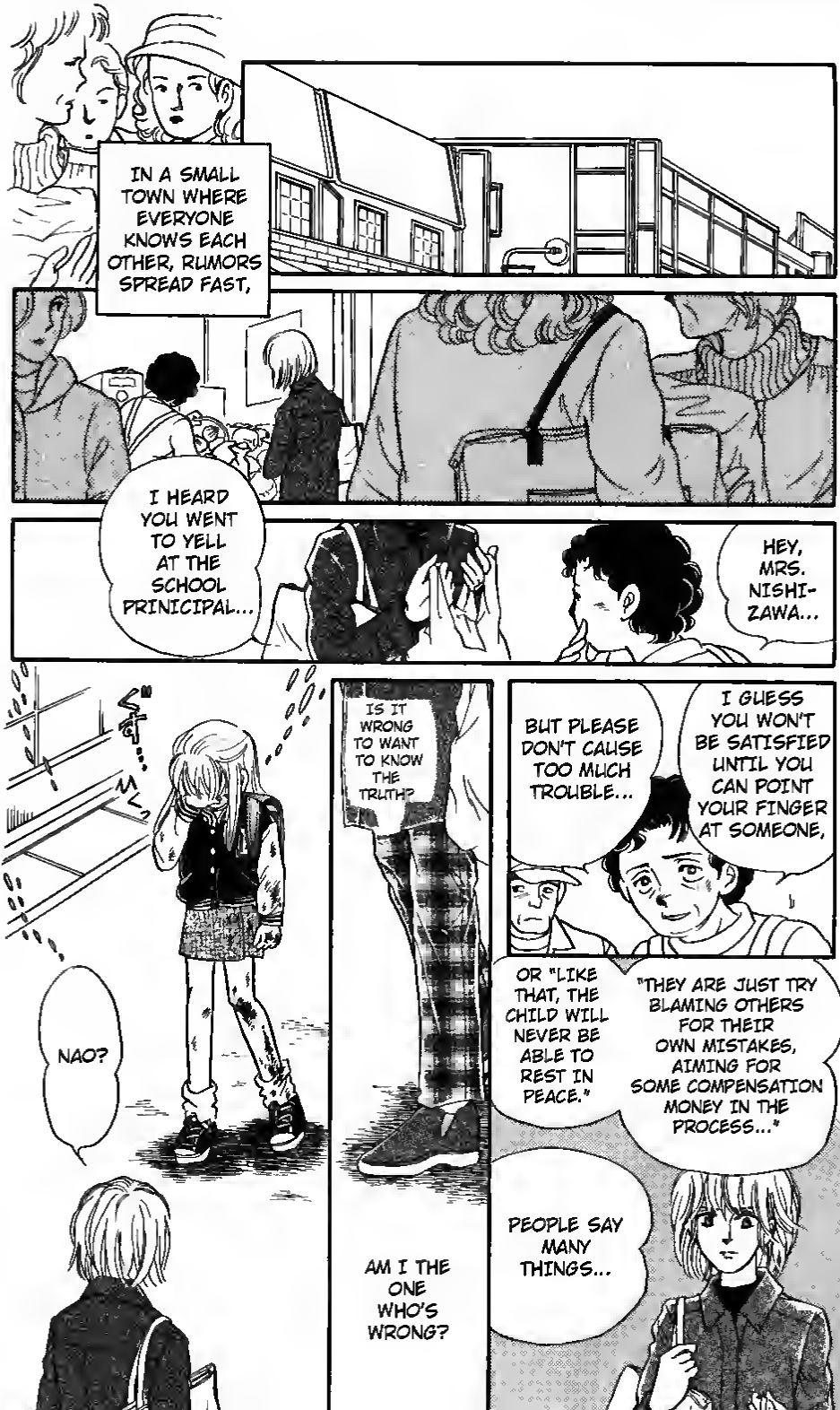
NISHI-ZAWA WAS IN OUR CLASS...
YEAH...
BUT WE WERE TOLD NOT TO TALK TO ANYONE FROM TELEVISION OR MAGAZINES ABOUT IT.
I'M REALLY SORRY...
UMM...
EXCUSE ME...
HUH...?
THE TEACHER TOLD US NOT TO TALK TO ANYONE ABOUT IT, REALLY...
DO YOU HAVE ANY BUSINESS WITH ONE OF OUR STUDENTS?

...
PRINCIPAL OFFICE
I ALSO HEARD THAT YOU WENT TO THE HOUSE OF ONE OF HIS CLASS-MATES.
ぎくっ!!
YOU HAVE MY SYMPATHY, REALLY, BUT THIS IS BECOMING A BOTHER TO THE SCHOOL!
I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED!
ALSO FOR MINORU'S REPUTATION ...
IF THE REAL TRUTH DOESN'T GET OUT, HE WILL ALWAYS STAY IN PEOPLE'S MINDS AS A TROUBLE-MAKER.
DO YOU REALLY THINK WE HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING?

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED, WE MADE ALL HIS FORMER CLASSMATES WRITE ABOUT THE EVENT OF NISHIZAWA'S DEATH.
THEIR HOME CLASS TEACHER TOLD ME ABOUT WHAT THEY WROTE.
IT SEEMED LIKE NISHIZAWA HAD SOME CHILDISH DISAGREE-MENTS WITH A FEW OTHER STUDENTS,
BUT NOTHING EVER HAPPENED THAT COULD BE SEEN AS BULLYING!
HUH...?
THE OTHER DAY, YOUR HUSBAND SENT US A COPY OF YOUR SON'S DIARY...
ALL THE KIDS OF WHICH HE MENTIONS THE NAME, ARE ALL CHILDREN WHO HAVE NEVER CAUSED A SINGLE ISSUE.
WE THINK IT MIGHT BE RATHER DANGEROUS TO TAKE SLANDEROUS STATEMENTS LIKE THOSE, WRITTEN FROM A SINGLE SOURCE AS THE TRUTH.
ARE YOU SAYING WHAT MINORU WROTE IS ALL NONSENSE !!?
NO, OF COURSE NOT, LADY...
BUT THERE'S THE DIFFICULT THING, YOU SEE...
IN A CASE OF BULLYING, IT'S ALWAYS VERY UNCLEAR WHO THE VICTIM REALLY IS.
AND THERE'S ALSO THE POSSIBILTY THAT HE MISTOOK WHAT WAS ACTUALLY A JOKE, AND STARTED THIS WHOLE VICTIM COMPLEX IN HIS HEAD...

...PLEASE SHOW ME!
HUH?
PLEASE SHOW ME THOSE PAPERS THAT HIS CLASS-MATES WROTE!
THAT'S ...
TO PROTECT THE STUDENTS' PRIVACY!
THOSE PAPERS HAVE ALREADY BEEN BURNED.
TO PROTECT THEIR... PRIVACY !!?
THOSE KIDS ARE THE CAUSE OF MINORU'S DEATH!
I FEEL REALLY SORRY FOR YOU, THAT YOU HAVE TO FEEL THAT WAY.
BUT LOOK, THINK ABOUT HIS FORMER CLASS-MATES FOR A SECOND!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN A VERY BIG SHOCK FOR THE WHOLE CLASS! ALSO FOR THE TEACHER...
THIS EVENT MUST HAVE SCARRED THE WHOLE CLASS!
JUST BECAUSE THIS BOY IMPULSIVELY ROBBED HIMSELF OF HIS LIFE AS AN ESCAPE,
SO MANY STUDENTS HAVE TO CARRY THIS SCAR WITH THEM FOR THEIR WHOLE LIFE...

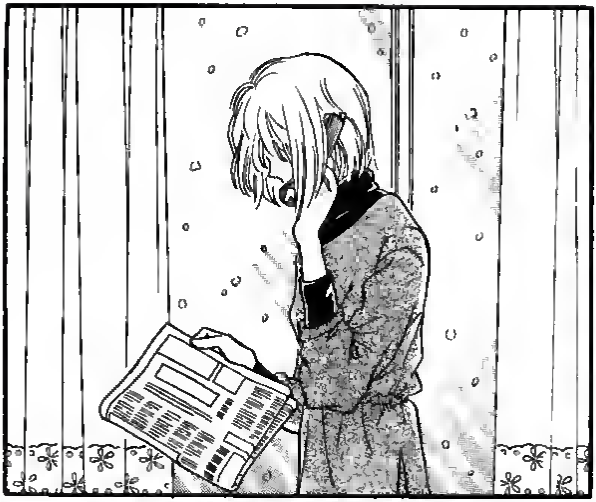
BUT ...
MINORU USED TO LOVE LIFE!
BUT SOMETHING MADE HIM FEEL SO CORNERED THAT HE COULDN'T CARRY ON ANYMORE...
ISN'T IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENTS, TO NOTICE SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
...!!
AT SCHOOL, WE ONLY HAVE A LIMITED VIEW OF WHAT'S GOING ON FOR OUR STUDENTS.
IF YOU DON'T NOTICE ANY OF THE SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MUST HAVE BEEN SENDING YOU AT HOME,
HOW DO YOU EVER EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO BRING UP A CHILD SAFE AND WELL?


IN A SMALL TOWN WHERE EVERYONE KNOWS EACH OTHER, RUMORS SPREAD FAST,
I HEARD YOU WENT TO YELL AT THE SCHOOL PRINICIPAL...
HEY, MRS. NISHI-ZAWA...
I GUESS YOU WON'T BE SATISFIED UNTIL YOU CAN POINT YOUR FINGER AT SOMEONE,
BUT PLEASE DON'T CAUSE TOO MUCH TROUBLE...
IS IT WRONG TO WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH?
NAO?
"THEY ARE JUST TRY BLAMING OTHERS FOR THEIR OWN MISTAKES, AIMING FOR SOME COMPENSATION MONEY IN THE PROCESS..."
OR "LIKE THAT, THE CHILD WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO REST IN PEACE."
PEOPLE SAY MANY THINGS...
AM I THE ONE WHO'S WRONG?

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU? YOUR KNEE IS ALL GRAZED!
DID YOU FALL SOME-WHERE?
I WAS KNOCKED DOWN...
WHEN I WAS ON MY WAY HOME,
BY A BOY FROM SIXTH GRADE...
WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE RUMORS ABOUT ME...!?
NO!
BECAUSE YOU HAD A FIGHT WITH THE SCHOOL...
HE SAID I WAS AN ENEMY OF THE SCHOOL AS WELL!
I TOLD HIM YOU JUST WANT TO PROVE THAT MINORU WASN'T AT FAULT,
...THAT YOU WERE DOING THE RIGHT THING!
THAT'S WHAT I TOLD HIM AND HIT HIM FIRST!
IT HURTS!!
ふえぇぇん
NAO ...

NAO...!? AT SCHOOL!?
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE HAS BEEN TEASED SOMETIMES BY HER SENIORS AND KIDS IN OTHER CLASSES FOR A WHILE.
I'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT MINORU THIS WHOLE TIME,
SO SHE KEPT IT TO HERSELF.
HUH ?
OUR CHILD WAS A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE!
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS TO TELL THE HOMEROOM TEACHER TO WATCH OUT FOR HER!?
DO YOU HAVE THE PHONE NUMBER OF NAO'S HOME ROOM TEACHER?
...NOW WE CAN STILL DO SOME-THING ABOUT IT...
THINKING THAT HE CAN HANDLE THIS HIMSELF...
WE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE MINORU'S CRIES FOR HELP.

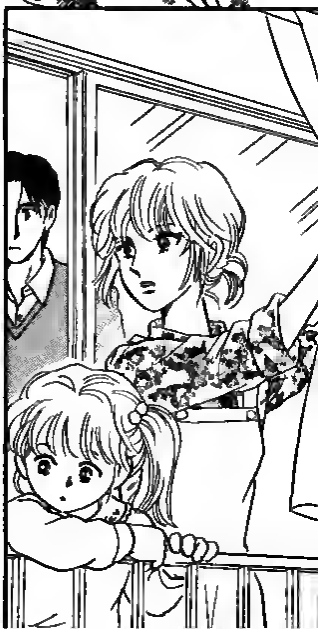
EVERY TIME WE GOT A NOTICE FROM SCHOOL...
WE WEREN'T INTERESTED IN UNDERSTANDING IT... WE WERE JUST INTERESTED IN SCOLDING.
WITHOUT EVEN ASKING HIM WHY HE WASN'T ATTENDING SCHOOL, WE JUST TRIED TO GET HIM TO GO ANYWAY...
MY HUSBAND...
WE SHOULD HAVE NOTICED THE SIGNS!
BEFORE MINORU BECAME THAT DISTANT FROM US,
WE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HELP HIM IF WE HAD NOTICED...!
HE FELT AGAIN THE PAIN OF DEEP REMORSE, AND THE FEELING OF POWERLESSNESS.
...LET NAO MEET THE SAME FATE AS WE LET MINORU MEET..
WE CAN'T ...
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL, YOU DON'T HAVE TO!
MOM AND DAD WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU!

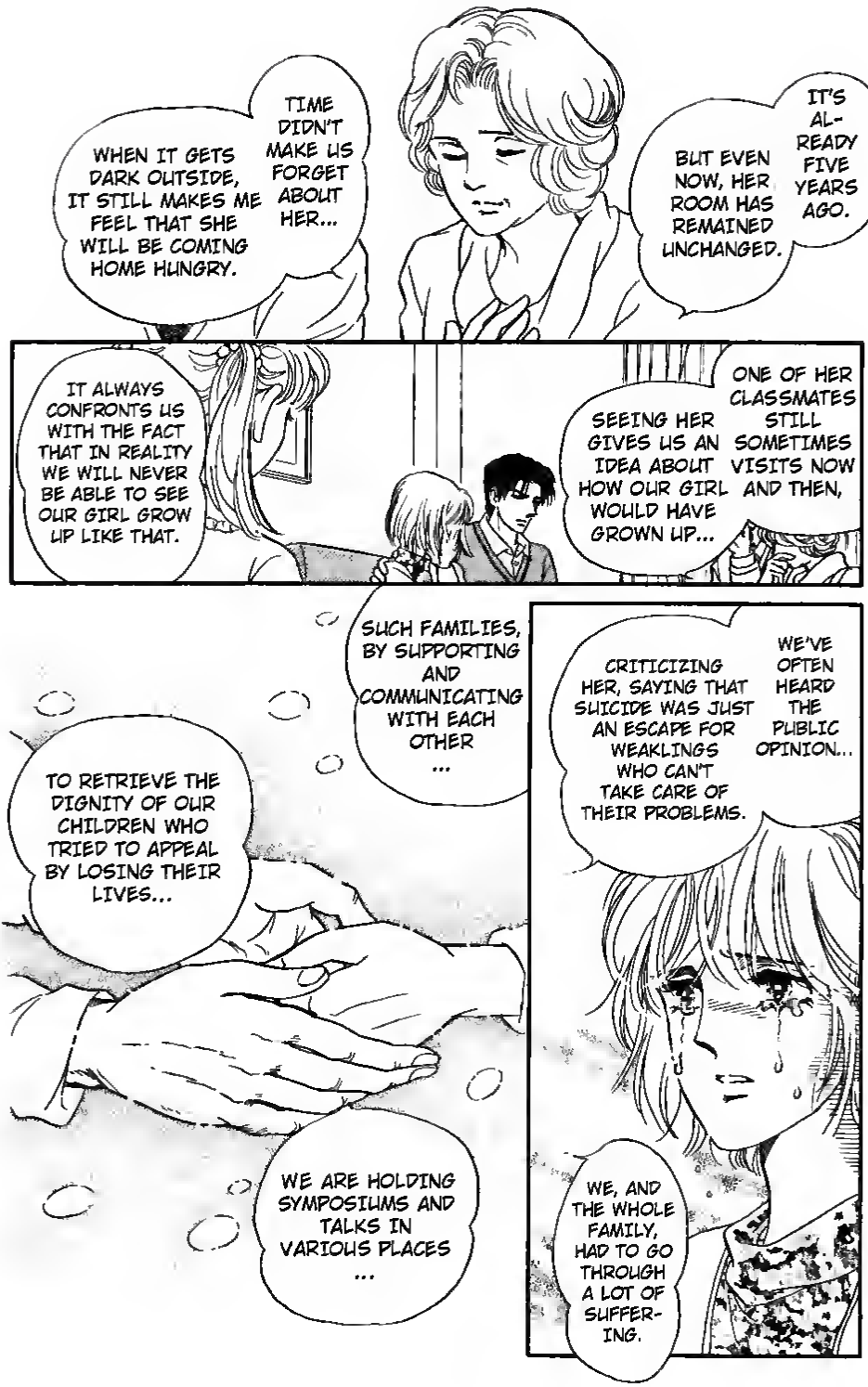


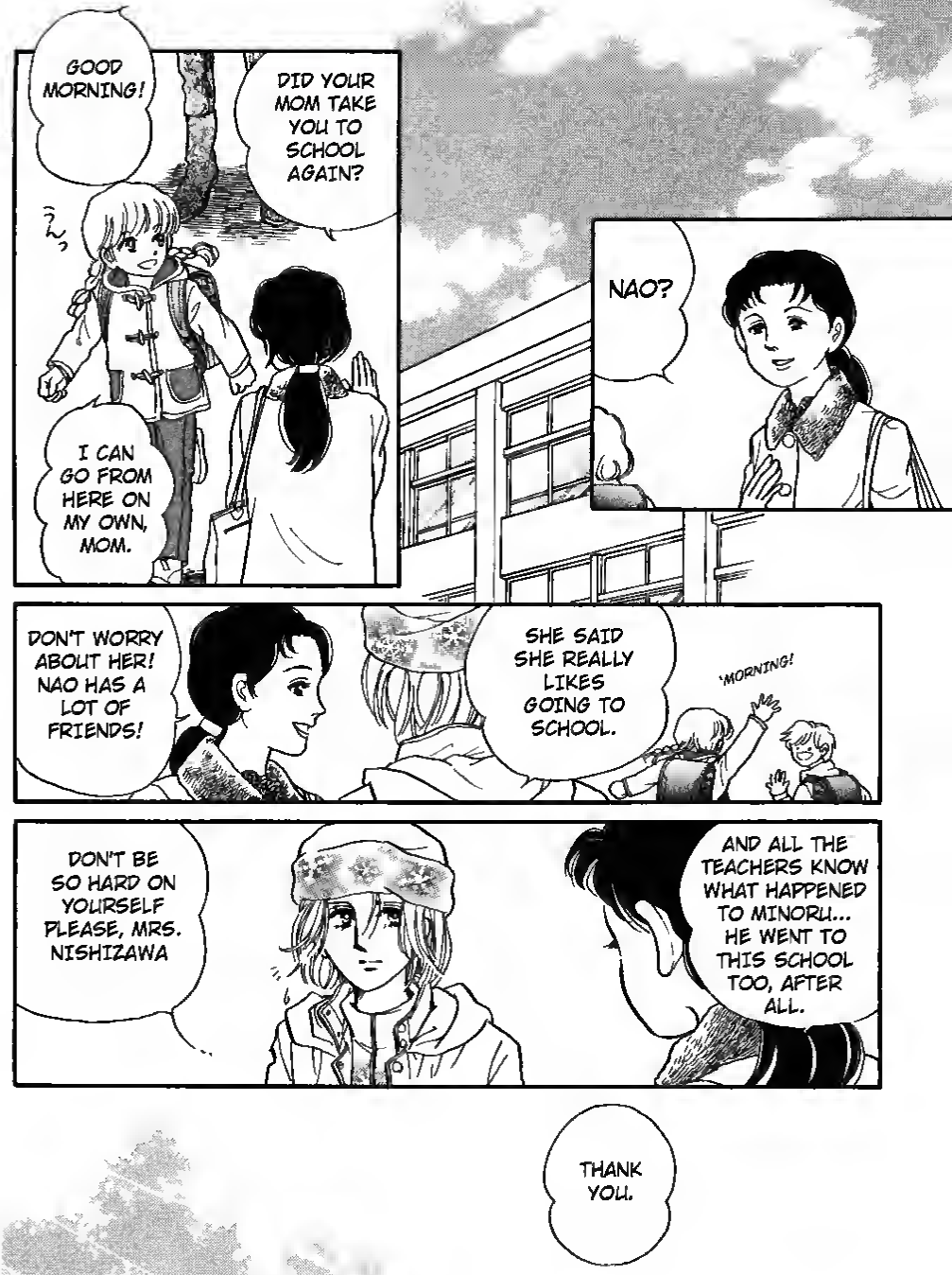
OUR FIGHT WAS JUST ABOUT TO START.

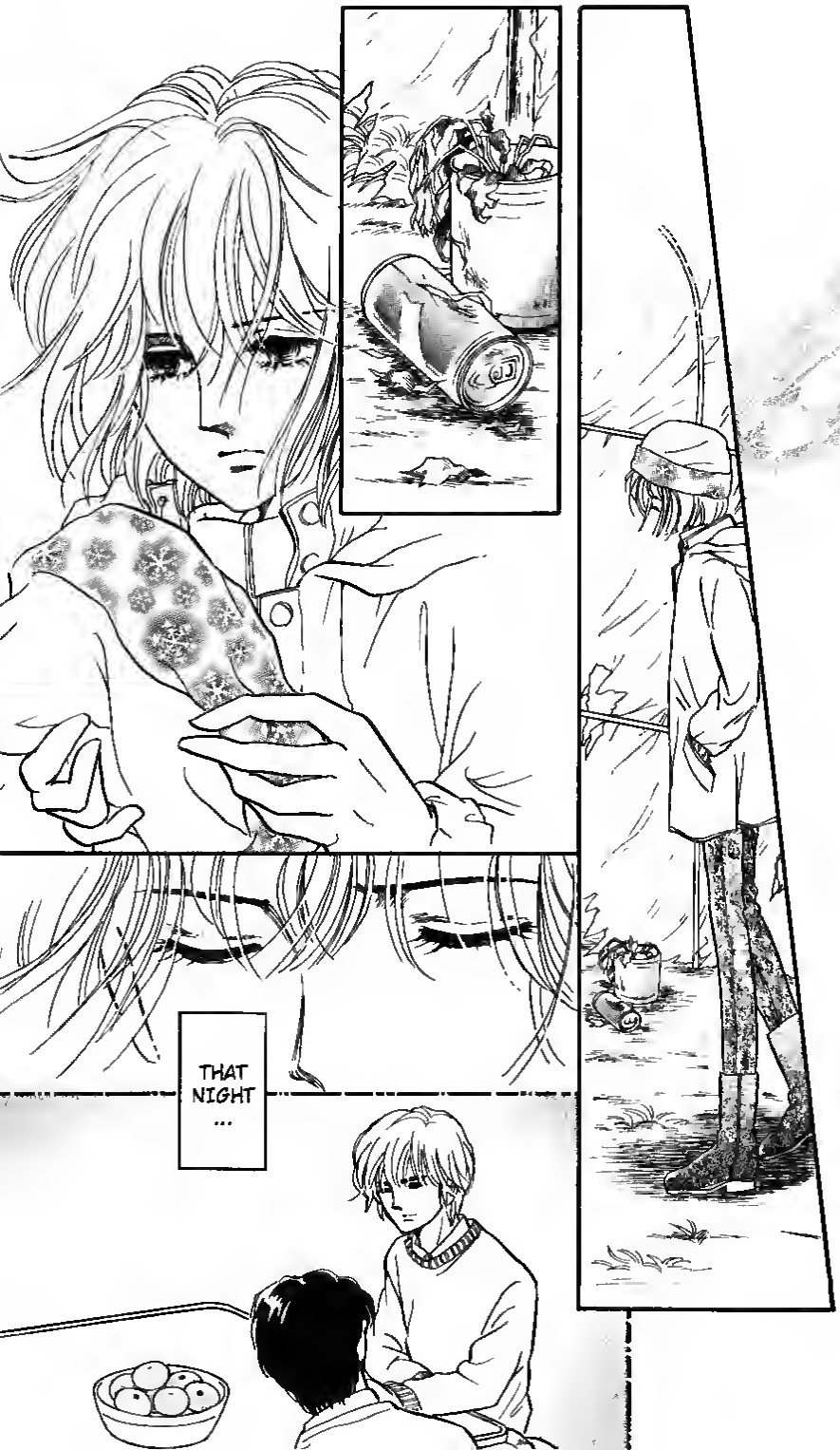
TELE-PHONE NUMBER: ...
BUT THERE IS A NETWORK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE.
TRIAL FOR SUICIDE CAUSED BY BULLYING
I CANNOT TELL YOU PERSONAL INFORMATION,

OUR GIRL DIED WHEN SHE WAS FIFTEEN...
Yuka's Last Letter




IT'S ALREADY FIVE YEARS AGO.
BUT EVEN NOW, HER ROOM HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED.
TIME DIDN'T MAKE US FORGET ABOUT HER...
WHEN IT GETS DARK OUTSIDE, IT STILL MAKES ME FEEL THAT SHE WILL BE COMING HOME HUNGRY.
ONE OF HER CLASSMATES STILL SOMETIMES VISITS NOW AND THEN,
SEEING HER GIVES US AN IDEA ABOUT HOW OUR GIRL WOULD HAVE GROWN UP...
IT ALWAYS CONFRONTS US WITH THE FACT THAT IN REALITY WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE OUR GIRL GROW UP LIKE THAT.
WE'VE OFTEN HEARD THE PUBLIC OPINION...
CRITICIZING HER, SAYING THAT SUICIDE WAS JUST AN ESCAPE FOR WEAKLINGS WHO CAN'T TAKE CARE OF THEIR PROBLEMS.
WE, AND THE WHOLE FAMILY, HAD TO GO THROUGH A LOT OF SUFFERING.
SUCH FAMILIES, BY SUPPORTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH EACH OTHER ...
TO RETRIEVE THE DIGNITY OF OUR CHILDREN WHO TRIED TO APPEAL BY LOSING THEIR LIVES...
WE ARE HOLDING SYMPOSIUMS AND TALKS IN VARIOUS PLACES ...


GOOD MORNING!
DID YOUR MOM TAKE YOU TO SCHOOL AGAIN?
I CAN GO FROM HERE ON MY OWN, MOM.
NAO?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER! NAO HAS A LOT OF FRIENDS!
SHE SAID SHE REALLY LIKES GOING TO SCHOOL.
'MORNING!
DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF PLEASE, MRS. NISHIZAWA
AND ALL THE TEACHERS KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO MINORU... HE WENT TO THIS SCHOOL TOO, AFTER ALL.
THANK YOU.


THAT NIGHT ...

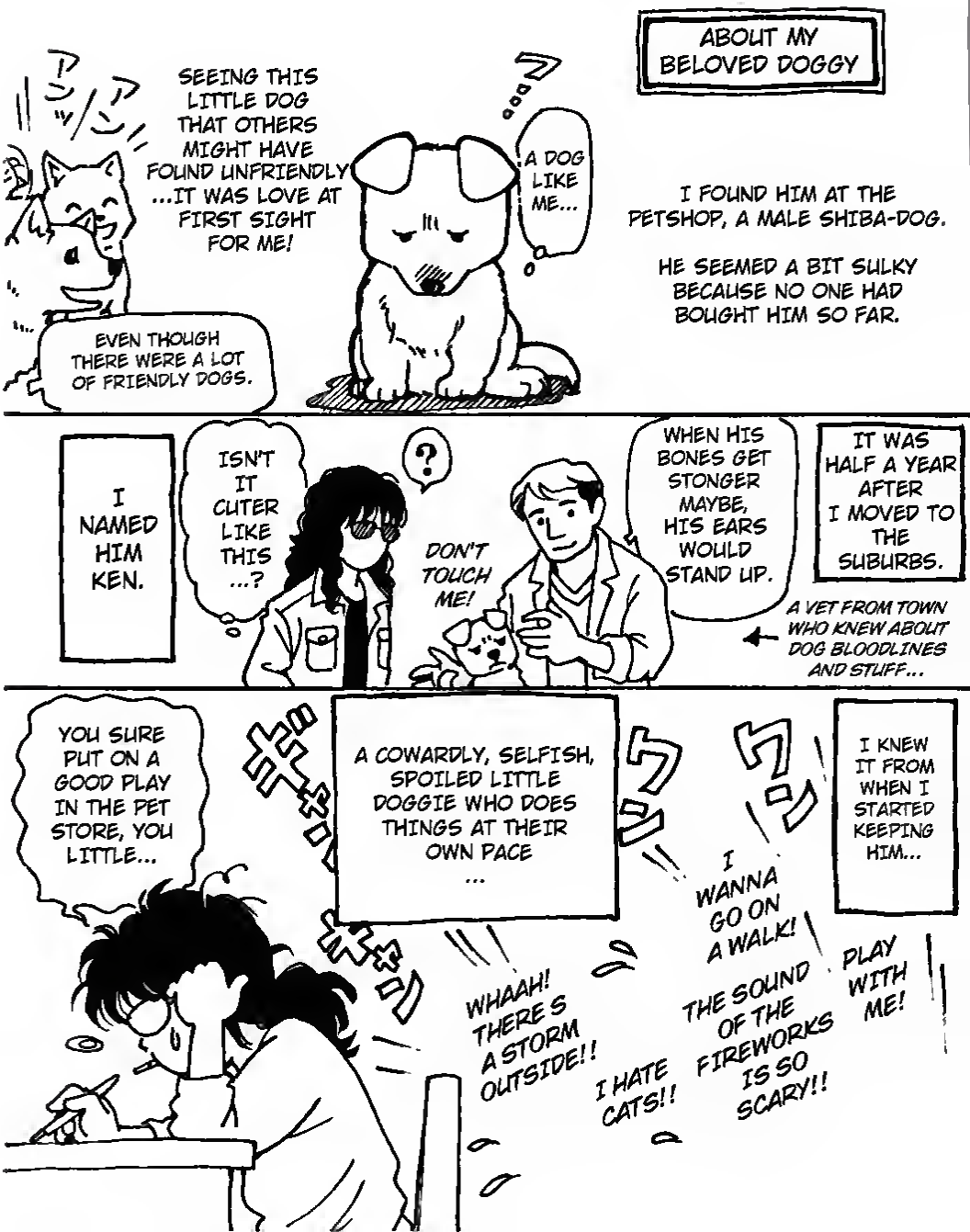
WELL THEN, I'M GOING TO SLEEP!
WHAT MUST HE HAVE FELT LIKE?
WALKING THAT DARK ROAD ALL ALONE...
I HAVE TO BE STRONG, SO I CAN KEEP FIGHTING FOR YOU!
I'M SO SORRY!
I JUST DON'T KNOW IT ANYMORE, MINORU!
HAVING COME THIS WHOLE WAY...

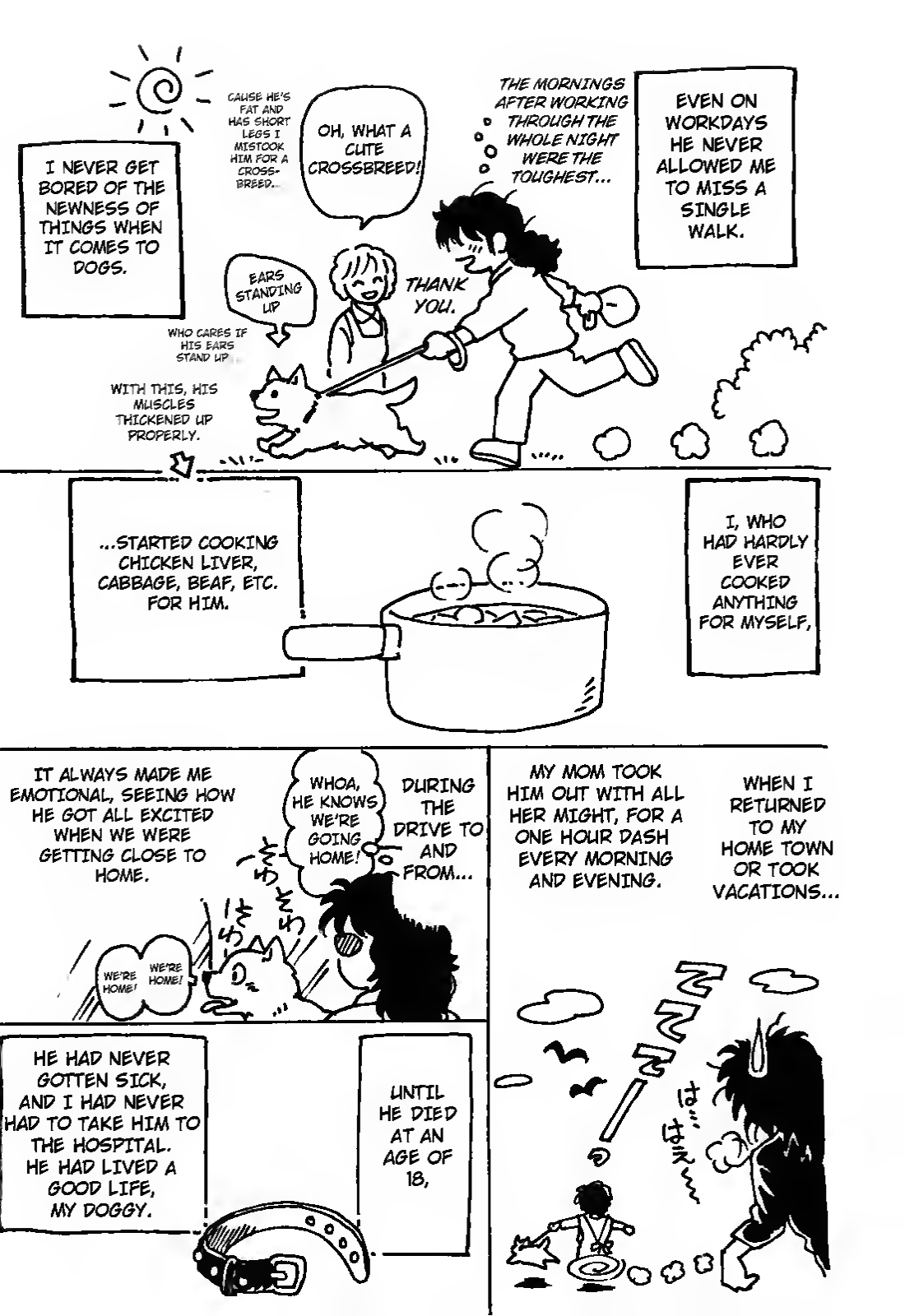
YOUR DIARY WHERE EVERY NEW DAY IS AN OPEN SPACE...
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN WRITING YOUR FUTURE THERE!
OH, I DON'T KNOW IT ANYMORE!!
JUST FOR TODAY...
SO...

NAO STARTED COMMUTING TO SCHOOL WITH FRIENDS MORE OFTEN THAN BEFORE.
THEY'RE HERE TO PICK YOU UP!
NAO!
ALL RIGHT, SEE YOU AFTER SCHOOL!
HER TEACHER TOLD ME.
THEY DECIDED THAT BY THEMSELVES,
LITTLE BY LITTLE,
STEP BY STEP...
YOU'LL ALWAYS STAY A PART OF US!
MINORU ...
LET'S GO TOGETHER TOWARDS THE FUTURE!
♦END♦

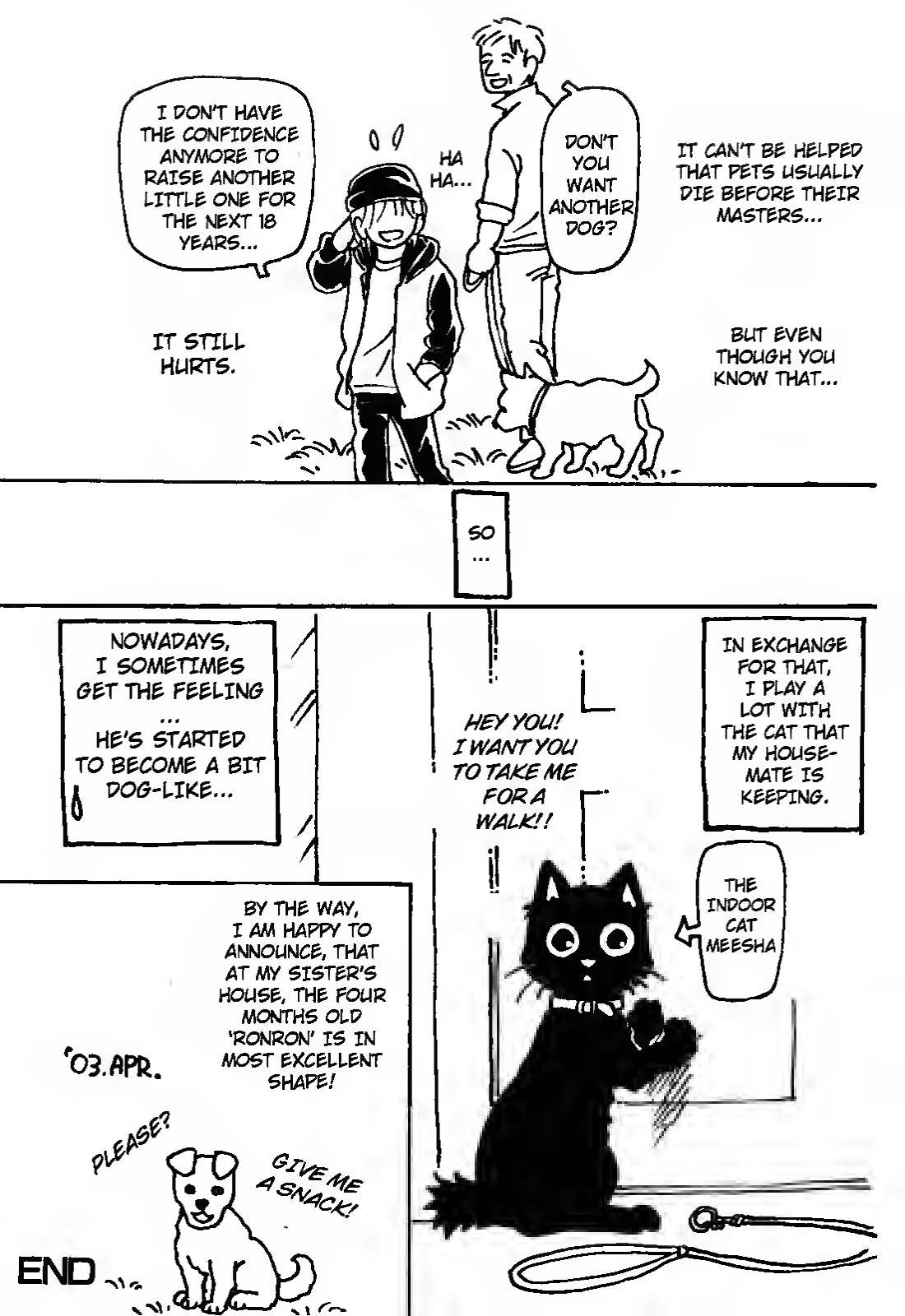
WONDER!

ABOUT DOGS


ABOUT MY BELOVED DOGGY
SEEING THIS LITTLE DOG THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE FOUND UNFRIENDLY ...IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT FOR ME!
A DOG LIKE ME...
EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE A LOT OF FRIENDLY DOGS.
I FOUND HIM AT THE PETSHOP, A MALE SHIBA-DOG.
HE SEEMED A BIT SULKY BECAUSE NO ONE HAD BOUGHT HIM SO FAR.
I NAMED HIM KEN.
ISN'T IT CUTER LIKE THIS ...?
?
DON'T TOUCH ME!
WHEN HIS BONES GET STONGER MAYBE, HIS EARS WOULD STAND UP.
IT WAS HALF A YEAR AFTER I MOVED TO THE SUBURBS.
A VET FROM TOWN WHO KNEW ABOUT DOG BLOODLINES AND STUFF...
YOU SURE PUT ON A GOOD PLAY IN THE PET STORE, YOU LITTLE...
A COWARDLY, SELFISH, SPOILED LITTLE DOGGIE WHO DOES THINGS AT THEIR OWN PACE ...
I KNEW IT FROM WHEN I STARTED KEEPING HIM...
I WANNA GO ON A WALK!
PLAY WITH ME!
WHAAH! THERE'S A STORM OUTSIDE!!
THE SOUND OF THE FIREWORKS IS SO SCARY!!
I HATE CATS!!


I NEVER GET BORED OF THE NEWNESS OF THINGS WHEN IT COMES TO DOGS.
CAUSE HE'S FAT AND HAS SHORT LEGS I MISTOOK HIM FOR A CROSS-BREED...
OH, WHAT A CUTE CROSSBREED!
THE MORNINGS AFTER WORKING THROUGH THE WHOLE NIGHT WERE THE TOUGHEST...
EVEN ON WORKDAYS HE NEVER ALLOWED ME TO MISS A SINGLE WALK.
EARS STANDING UP
WHO CARES IF HIS EARS STAND UP...
THANK YOU.
WITH THIS, HIS MUSCLES THICKENED UP PROPERLY.
...STARTED COOKING CHICKEN LIVER, CABBAGE, BEAF, ETC. FOR HIM.
I, WHO HAD HARDLY EVER COOKED ANYTHING FOR MYSELF,
IT ALWAYS MADE ME EMOTIONAL, SEEING HOW HE GOT ALL EXCITED WHEN WE WERE GETTING CLOSE TO HOME.
WHOA, HE KNOWS WE'RE GOING HOME!
DURING THE DRIVE TO AND FROM...
WE'RE HOME!
WE'RE HOME!
MY MOM TOOK HIM OUT WITH ALL HER MIGHT, FOR A ONE HOUR DASH EVERY MORNING AND EVENING.
WHEN I RETURNED TO MY HOME TOWN OR TOOK VACATIONS...
HE HAD NEVER GOTTEN SICK, AND I HAD NEVER HAD TO TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL. HE HAD LIVED A GOOD LIFE, MY DOGGY.
UNTIL HE DIED AT AN AGE OF 18,

ABOUT PETS
HIS NAME WAS RON, AND HE WAS THE DOG OF MY ELDER SISTER'S FAMILY.
THIS WAS THE DOG I USED AS THE MODEL FOR WONDER IN THIS STORY,
I WANT A SNACK!!
GIVE ME A SNACK !!
HE WAS A MIXED SHIBA-TYPE, A LITTLE BIT BIGGER THAN KEN USED TO BE.
WHEN I WENT TO TAKE SOME PICTURES OF HIM AS A REFERENCE, I COULDN'T KEEP MYSELF FROM TOUCHING, PETTING AND HUGGING HIM.
JUST GIVE ME A SNACK!
FEELS SO GOOD !
I HAD BEEN LIVING FOR A LONG TIME WITHOUT A DOG.
HUH? HE HAD A CHRONIC DISEASE?
HE SEEMED SO HEALTHY AT THAT TIME, BUT ONLY HALF A YEAR LATER...
HE DIED AT THE YOUNG AGE OF SIX...
I TOOK HIM OUT FOR A WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS NEAR MY SISTER'S HOUSE.


I DON'T HAVE THE CONFIDENCE ANYMORE TO RAISE ANOTHER LITTLE ONE FOR THE NEXT 18 YEARS...
HA HA...
DON'T YOU WANT ANOTHER DOG?
IT CAN'T BE HELPED THAT PETS USUALLY DIE BEFORE THEIR MASTERS...
IT STILL HURTS.
BUT EVEN THOUGH YOU KNOW THAT...
SO ...
NOWADAYS, I SOMETIMES GET THE FEELING ... HE'S STARTED TO BECOME A BIT DOG-LIKE...
HEY YOU! I WANT YOU TO TAKE ME FOR A WALK!!
IN EXCHANGE FOR THAT, I PLAY A LOT WITH THE CAT THAT MY HOUSE-MATE IS KEEPING.
THE INDOOR CAT MEESHA
BY THE WAY, I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE, THAT AT MY SISTER'S HOUSE, THE FOUR MONTHS OLD 'RONRON' IS IN MOST EXCELLENT SHAPE!
'03.APR.
PLEASE?
GIVE ME A SNACK!
END

JOUR COMICS
WONDER! ①
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